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THE
HISTORY
OF
TOM RIGBY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F
T O M R I G B Y.



B O O K VI.

 ILLASTON, who went under the name of the Mad Gentleman, in the country, used to take many solitary walks; and in a short time knew the country all over; and, having told his friend that he had occasion to go home, promised soon to return again; and accordingly set out on his in-

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tended

tended journey. In his absence, Rigby went to see his old friend Mrs. Wilcox; and found Sir Thomas Crawford there, who, as he was informed, was an admirer of Miss Bennet. His character, fortune, and person, were unexceptionable; and as his proposals to Mr. Bennet were very generous, he was received on the most favourable footing by the father. If any thing, he was rather too old for his daughter, being near thirty: except that, and a want of inclination for him, she could have no reasonable objection to comply with her father's wishes. Mrs. Wilcox could not at first give any guess at the cause why she obstinately shunned Sir Thomas. She hardly ever would remain with him alone; expressing her dislike of him in private to her, and in public declaring to him her aversion to matrimony. Sir Thomas, who had good friends in Mr. Bennet, and in Wilcox and his wife, determined, by assiduity and true affection, to remove, if possible, her objections;

objections; nor could her cousin conceive why she should refuse to be Lady Crawford. The cause was yet a secret; but as women, perhaps from a similarity of sentiment, can sooner perceive what passes in each others breasts, and find out the motives that actuate their conduct, sooner than the other sex; so Mrs. Wilcox thought she had penetrated into the mystery, but waited for further proofs, before she acquainted her cousin with her suspicions.

The visit of Rigby, when Sir Thomas Crawford was in the presence of his mistress, settled the affair at once. The candid and ingenuous Lydia was much distressed, in the thoughts of receiving a person well whom she could not bear, and appearing cool and indifferent to him who really, though ignorantly, possessed her heart. She therefore could not help treating Sir Thomas with a severity and pride she had never shewn before; her conduct had ever indicated more indifference and

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carelessness, than thorough dislike; but now it was intirely altered.

Mrs. Wilcox was not long at a loss for the reasons of this change: and as she had a great esteem for the man who had so generously and unsolicited espoused her cause, and procured her happiness, she was not displeased at these tokens of her cousin's regard for him: but she determined to draw them from her own mouth: and the next day, when they were alone, she went into the kitchen, and returning after a short stay to the parlour, where Miss Bennet was, and affecting an air of concern and surprise, "Lord, my dear I have heard
" very disagreeable news."

"What is it?"

"Poor Mr. Rigby, going from hence
" last night was thrown from his horse,
" and hurt himself dangerously."

Lydia started from her seat, and in the
agony

agony of her heart clasped her hands together and exclaimed. "Oh, my God!" then falling into her chair again, pale and almost lifeless, fainted away.

Mrs. Wilcox had no power to tell her that she was deceived, so much was she agitated, and she heartily repented her putting her scheme in agitation. Terrified as she was, yet she gave her every assistance in her power, and when she was recovered entreated her to forgive her.

"For what?" said Lydia.

"For frightening you thus. But I assure you that I would not have done so if I thought it would have had such a violent and instant effect upon you, for it was only a scheme to find out whether some suspicions of mine were just or not."

"Ah," said Lydia, the whiteness of her cheeks changing to a faint red, "why have you thus distressed me? Why

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“ would you employ so cruel an artifice
“ to expose me ?”

“ Indeed, my dear cousin, I confess
“ that it was cruel, and I have been very
“ heartily frightened by it ; but a woman’s
“ curiosity you know will carry her a great
“ length, and mine is satisfied. If I had
“ attempted to have drawn the secret of
“ your heart from you in any other man-
“ ner, there would have been some room
“ for equivocation, and I never should
“ have been thoroughly acquainted with
“ it—But now—”

“ Aye, now indeed you have learned
“ my folly and unhappiness. But do not,”
added she with a sigh, “ do not let my
“ weakness be known, I beseech you.”

Mrs. Wilcox assured her she might depend upon her prudence and secrecy, promising her faithfully to conceal this matter even from her husband.

Lydia forgave her the deceit that extorted the confession of her affection for
Rigby

Rigby from her ; and when she had recovered from the fright, found that she was benefited by the discovery, as she could now talk freely to her friend concerning her situation, and open her heart without reserve : by her means too Rigby was frequently invited over to see them, and she was indulged in the enjoyment of his company and conversation. This gave her great pleasure in one sense, while it made her unhappy in another. Much satisfaction arose from the sight of the object of her regard ; but he was unconscious of it, and she had the mortification to see him totally indifferent, whilst her own apprehensive delicacy forbade her to shew him the least preference, and she trembled lest an unguarded word or action should lead him to the knowledge of what passed in her distracted bosom.

Mrs. Wilcox was not without hope, but, by frequently seeing and conversing with the amiable and sensible Lydia, Rigby's

B 4

heart

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heart would be touched, or that he would perceive some small indications of her sentiments so favourable to him, which would be sufficient to embolden him to open his heart to her. But the season wore away in that manner, and they saw him prepare for his departure with great anxiety.

Hillafton had returned again to Rigby within a fortnight, and as he was treated in a manner that pleased him at the farmer's, he conceived a great liking and friendship for the whole family. Wilkins's eldest daughter, between seventeen and eighteen, was a great favourite of his: he liked the innocence of her deportment, the simplicity of her manner, and the ingenuousness of her mind. Frequently had he, in his stern and uncouth way, given her the most wholesome advice. She was pretty, and the precepts and example of her mother and Mrs. Rigby had fortified her mind with lessons of virtue. Her little heart was grateful to Hillafton for his
good-

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good-nature and friendship ; and she lamented his distraction, while she admired his sentiments. The truth was, she had been educated rather above the sphere of the farmer's daughters in that country, and Hillaston thought her an object that would tempt the desire of some country 'Squire or other. An intimacy had subsisted between the Wilkins family and that of one Mr. Pitman, a neighbouring gentleman farmer, ever since the former settled in Berkshire. He was a man of strict honesty and integrity, had an estate of about two hundred and fifty pounds a year, and rented a farm of about four hundred more. He had two daughters, and as many sons ; the eldest of whom was a country beau. His father bred him up entirely in the knowledge of agriculture : and he had made as many conquests among the fair rustics, as his brother fops have done among the dames of quality in the town. They lived between five and six

miles from Wilkins's house; and in the frequent visits of the girls backwards and forwards he fixed the eyes of affection upon Hannah Wilkins, and she did not dislike the smart appearance of Tom Pitman. Hillaston had seen them often together, observed the symptoms of mutual regard, and had conceived no very good opinion of young Pitman; but he would not attempt to say any thing to Hannah about it, and therefore was silent till he saw whether his suspicions would be confirmed or not. During the fortnight that he had been absent the Miss Pitmans made a visit at Mr. Wilkins's, and staid there a week, the brother coming over occasionally to see them: when they went away, Mrs. Wilkins promised to let Hannah go and stay with them, but could not spare her younger daughter at the same time; therefore soon after Hillaston returned she went over to Pitman's. During her residence there it entered into Hillaston's head,

head, that this would be a good opportunity for young Pitman to improve with the credulous and innocent Hannah. He would not make the good people unhappy by communicating his opinion of Tom Pitman, whose principles he detested; but on the afternoon of the day on which she had appointed to come home, and which she could not break through, he set out with an intention to meet her on the road. On that afternoon too Hannah Wilkins, attended by the two Miss Pitmans and their brother, also set out for Mr. Wilkins's. It was the intention of the two girls to see their companion half way, which they accordingly did, and then took their leaves, after recommending her to the care of their brother, and proceeded homewards.

Pitman was now in the situation he wished. He had not failed to improve the many opportunities that her stay at his father's had afforded him; and but too

successful had he been in persuading the unsuspecting Hannah that he was doatingly fond of her, found the way to please her, and she really loved him. How difficult it is for a girl, who loves to keep within the strait line of discretion, to repell the approaches of a man who is dear to her! Hannah, though pure as the falling snow in heart and intention, yet was not able to treat her admirer with proper severity: and while she was giving him proofs of her regard, was betraying herself: and his guilty heart, at that instant, was planing schemes for her overthrow. To be left alone with her therefore in this manner was extremely agreeable to him: nor was it displeasing to her to be in such a situation with him, that she could hear his vows without interruption. She leaned upon his arm to help her in her walk; and he breathed forth his affection for her with great volubility and earnestness. She listened with attention, and believed it all.

How

How infatuating are the honied words of those we love ! Convinced of his passion by his protestations, her heart underwent unusual palpitations. Dangerous delusion ! They were to pass through the skirt of a wood in their road home. They had just entered it—Pitman made a stumble : he had sprained his ankle, as he pretended. The compassionate Hannah entreated him to sit down till he recovered himself. No, he would go on : but he was prevailed on at last, and a green-fod seat, that naturally rose round the foot of an oak, very fortunately presented itself : thither they retired and reposed themselves. The tender Hannah lamenting the accident in the most pitiful manner, the lover made light of it, rubbed his ankle, and declared it would soon be well. “ But,” said he, “ you “ can give me a speedy cure for it—a “ balmy kifs.”

A kifs could not be refused ; but that afforded such exquisite delight, he must have
another.

another. Weak was the resistance which poor Hannah made to the familiarities, yet consistent with virtue, which Pitman attempted. Her condescension, and the good opinion she had of him, threw her more off her guard: and now was the time to use that gentle force with which he had already triumphed over many victims of his passion: he accordingly began the attack, and proceeded to lengths which alarmed Hannah, and which she repulsed with a proper and becoming spirit. Tom knew this was a lonesome place: and his favourite maxim was, which experience had confirmed, that women must be forced to what they like; and accordingly he determined to make the best of his time and opportunity. Poor Hannah, who found herself overpowered by his strength, added screams to her struggles in hopes of drawing some assistance to her. Weak and breathless, her resistance grew fainter: and he had almost effected his purpose, when

when Hillaston, who had heard somebody's cries, appeared in sight; but knowing Hannah's dress, made up to the spot where Pitman had designed to triumph over her.

"Oh, Mr. Hillaston," said she, "I am very glad to see you."

"Perhaps you may not," said he, with his usual composure: "but insolent boy, what is the reason you have treated this girl in so base a manner?"

"What is that to you," replied Pitman, "if I had a mind to it?"

"I will tell you what it is to me," replied he knitting his brows, his eyes glaring with uncommon ferocity: "that girl has been imposed on by you, and I suspected it; I therefore wanted to be assured whether I was right or no. I find I am: and therefore not to hurt this foolish girl's character, and to preserve the peace of two families, I will punish you myself for this attempt."

"You

"You must be able first," said Pitman, whose fame at cudgel playing and boxing was known all over the country.

"I'll convince you of that directly," replied Hillaston, throwing down his hat, and going up to his antagonist; whom, maugre his resistance, he lifted, and dashed him to the ground.

"Lie there," said he, "till I am at leisure to complete your punishment."

Pitman, who was not much hurt, rose with terms of defiance, and again provoked Hillaston, who soon reduced him to his former situation.

"Stir on your peril," said he, "and I will make you an example to all rascals in the county."

Then turning about to a young hazle that was near him, took out his knife, and began to cut a good sizeable switch with great deliberation.

Poor Hannah sat a breathless and terrified spectator of this scene: she would have
inter-

interposed in favour of Pitman, if she dared; but, convinced of her defender's madness, she was as much afraid, as if she had offended him.

Pitman, whilst Hillaston was clearing the switch which he had cut from the leaves and little twigs, began to consider that he was in bad hands; that the superiority of his enemy's strength had been sufficiently proved; and that it would be ridiculous to make another trial of it. If therefore he could get the heels of him once, he trusted to his own swiftness to disengage him from an adventure which seemed likely to terminate in his disgrace: besides, he had every thing to fear from the madness and desperation of his foe. He had not suffered so much from the two falls he had, as to prevent his running; therefore, while Hillaston's back was turned, he rose on his hands and knees, and, creeping away silently, got up and took to his heels with all his speed. Hillaston
turning

turning about, missed him, and just had a sight of him at a distance. He flung down the knife and stick, which he had now properly prepared for the purpose he designed, and with amazing speed pursued the fugitive; who, on the other hand, hearing the steps of Hillaston, exerted all his strength and swiftness. The chase did not last long; for he was soon overtaken.

"Do you mean to murder me?" said Pitman.

"No; I have more regard to myself: but I want to shew your mistress what a pretty fellow attempted to ravish her."

So saying, he lugged his prisoner along; who, when he attempted to struggle, was told, that his resistance would only make him use him worse than he designed. The other believed it, and walked back quietly.

When they arrived at the place where Hannah was still sitting, Hillaston took up his knife, which he put in his pocket very deliberate-

deliberately; then taking the switch also, thus addressed his companions :

“ I believe, Hannah, you are sufficient-
 “ ly punished for the mis-placed confidence
 “ you had in this rogue; who taking ad-
 “ vantage of your good opinion of him,
 “ wanted to rob you of your virgin honour.
 “ You are mortified enough, I fancy: but
 “ you would have been more so, when this
 “ rascal, having compleated your ruin,
 “ would have published your shame, and
 “ brought sorrow and disgrace on your un-
 “ happy parents. For, be assured, that
 “ the man who would make such an at-
 “ tempt as he has done, would not scruple
 “ to expose you had he effected it. I know
 “ the law would punish him severely for
 “ this assault; but it would be detrimental
 “ to your character, shocking to your deli-
 “ cacy; and, among the villanous and un-
 “ thinking part of his sex, he would be
 “ applauded, and you alone would suffer.
 “ To prevent this shall be my task; and
 “ I will

"I will take care that he shall have no
 "cause to boast of this evening's success.

"As for you, Sir, I shall be your best
 "friend: and the timely and seasonable
 "correction I shall give you, will, per-
 "haps, save you from exemplary punish-
 "ment, for some adventures you might
 "otherwise hereafter atchieve. I will send
 "you home as you deserve, beaten with
 "many stripes; and, instead of causing
 "shame and disgrace to fall on her too
 "credulous head, and those of her inno-
 "cent and unhappy parents, you shall
 "suffer in the flesh."

So saying, he seized his right wrist with
 his left hand; and pushing him from him,
 began to lay on his back, shoulders, and
 arms, with the switch he had; crying at
 the same time, "This will break no
 "bones."

Shame prevented Pitman's roaring out;
 but, as Hillafton struck with heart and
 good

good will, he writhed and twisted, from the smart occasioned by the strokes.

The instrument of correction soon failed :
 “ And now, ” said he, “ if you seek re-
 “ venge, I assure you, when next I see
 “ you, this shall be a fleabite to what you
 “ shall have. I suppose shame will pre-
 “ vent your relating this circumstance, as
 “ you will get no great honour by it. One
 “ thing is, I shall conceal it; and I pro-
 “ mise that Hannah shall.—But now you
 “ see, child, what a poor beaten abject
 “ boy this is, who would have deprived
 “ you of your peace for ever.—Go home,
 “ and mend your ways.”

Pitman took his advice, and went home-
 wards without saying a word to them.

Though heartily incensed at the treat-
 ment he had met with, and sore with the
 stripes he had received, he found, on ma-
 ture consideration, that it would not re-
 dound to his honour to make the story
 known; and therefore thought it more
 prudent

prudent to conceal it, and put up with what had happened, rather than either provoke Hillaſton's further wrath, whom he conſidered as a mad man, or to loſe his character as a clever fellow in the country; which would inevitably be the conſequence, if this affair ſhould come to light.

In the mean time Hillaſton, taking up his ſtaff, aſked Hannah if ſhe was ready to go home. To which ſhe replied, ſhe was; and deſiring her to lean upon his arm, they went homewards. On his way he ordered her not to mention any thing of this affair at home; and repreſented to her, that the world would be apt to ſuppoſe matters had proceeded farther than they really did; and gave her very good advice with regard to her future conduct with Pitman. He ſpoke in the gentleſt and moſt tender manner to her; and, on that occaſion, ſeemed to have thrown aſide that ſternneſs which in every other circumſtance ſo ſtrongly marked his character.

When

When they arrived at Wilkins's, the appearance of Mr. Hillaſton and Hannah was eaſily accounted for. He met Mr. Pitman and her; and the latter having buſineſs at home, recommended her to his care, and he accordingly conducted her ſafe home. However, Hannah had not got rid of her fright, and ſhe looked pale and ill. This alarmed her mother, who preſſed her to tell her what ailed her: but ſhe reſuſed to do ſo, till Mr. Hillaſton gave her permiſſion; for ſhe told him ſhe could not think of hiding this affair from her mother. He conſented ſhe ſhould reveal it: and, when Mrs. Wilkins came to thank him, with tears in her eyes, for the kind part he had acted towards her daughter, he told her, he deſired nothing more than that ſhe ſhould conceal it, from her huſband at leaſt, till he was gone, and till he ſhould learn whether there was any notice taken of it by the Pitman family. She conſented, and every thing was quiet.

Hannah

Hannah Wilkins, however, could not help informing Rigby of the behaviour of his friend, and he was more astonished than ever at the oddity of his manner, while his heart seemed fraught with virtuous sentiments, and his actions testified his regard for justice. Time only could explain the cause of these seeming contradictions.

As the season approached for their return to Cambridge, they prepared for their journey, and performed it in the same manner that they came, but without meeting any thing extraordinary. Hil-
laſton, during the walk, assured Rigby of his good opinion of him, and told him he would ſoon give him the greateſt proof of it. He viſited him two or three times after he went to Cambridge. He had been abſent for a month, and his friend could not imagine the cauſe of his long ſtay. At laſt he came, and entering into Rigby's chamber, threw himſelf into a chair, without ſpeaking a word. As he was accuſ-
tomed

tomed to do what he pleased, Rigby said nothing to him; but looking in his face, perceived a great alteration. Grief and affliction had assumed the place of wildness and horror, and his whole appearance indicated distress.—“I fear you are not well, Hillaston,” said Rigby, “let something be got for you, and have some proper advice.”

“Oh,” replied he, with a sigh, that seemed to shatter all his bulk, “my disorder is beyond the reach of medicine or advice. Will physic cure the passions? Will it give peace to my soul, harrowed with guilt? Will it restore peace to the mind, agonized even to distraction? Will it erase from my memory the traces of the scenes I have passed through? Or will any advice compose my disturbed spirit?—No—Anguish, shame and misery remain for me. Why was I born? Or why do I exist? I ought to have put an end to a being that is so replete with

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“woe. I have determined to open my
“heart to you, Rigby; you shall know the
“cause of my wretchedness; you only shall
“know that which is an impenetrable my-
“stery to the rest of the world.—Lock
“the door, and let no other human ear be
“acquainted with it. Sufficient are my
“own feelings and remorse. But, Rigby,
“I fear thou wilt, henceforward, detest
“and abhor me. Yet, if you do, pity my
“sufferings.—Guilty though I am, great is
“my punishment, and severely do I ex-
“piate my crimes. Nature, which gave
“me strong passions, and formed me of a
“sanguine disposition, only laid the founda-
“tion of my misery, and my breast is the
“mansion of despair. Give me thy atten-
“tion, my friend, if my horrible story
“will suffer you. Oh! that my brain
“would burst into madness, and then I
“should be relieved. I believe I am flighty
“sometimes; the world thinks me a luna-
“tic—Wou’d to Heaven I were so.”

The

The tears stood in his eyes as he spoke ; he covered his face, expressive of the severest and most poignant anguish, with his hands, and wept aloud. The astonished Rigby sat gazing at him, lost in silent wonder ; his benevolent heart dissolved with pity.

“ This last month,” said Hillaston, “ I
“ formed the design of imparting my history
“ to you ; but as no hint tending to a dis-
“ covery of it ever escaped my lips, it re-
“ quired some practice to accustom myself
“ to utter them, and inure me to the sound.
“ Since I saw you last I have walked, not-
“ withstanding the severity of the season,
“ above three hundred miles. In the midst
“ of barren heaths and pathless mountains,
“ where no ear heard, and no eye saw me,
“ I have mingled my complaints with the
“ howling of the tempest, and have added
“ my groans and sighs to the fury of the
“ storm. I have, at length, brought my-
“ self to bear once more—Hear it.

“ My father had an estate of about
 “ seven hundred pounds a year, upon the
 “ borders of this county, and in Suffolk,
 “ which it joins. He died when I was very
 “ young, and left me all his property,
 “ chargeable with a jointure of three hun-
 “ dred pounds a year to my mother, and a
 “ portion to my sister of seven thousand
 “ pounds. He had but us two. I am the
 “ elder by near two years. Our infancy
 “ passed like other children, and was re-
 “ markable for little else than the affection
 “ I conceived for my sister. We were al-
 “ ways together, and, as we lived retired,
 “ had few other companions.

“ When I was sent to school I always
 “ longed to be at home with her, and ne-
 “ ver was so happy as in her society. This
 “ desire grew upon me ; and, as I advanced
 “ in years, I found it more sensibly. Her
 “ conversation was my greatest satisfaction,
 “ her company my only enjoyment. The
 “ tenderest friendship ever subsisted be-
 “ tween

“tween us; and, under that name, the
 “criminal and guilty passion which has de-
 “stroyed my peace first got foundation.

“In due time I was sent to this univer-
 “sity, where I was matriculated; and be-
 “ing so near home, I went frequently thi-
 “ther. Anna was then about sixteen, and
 “her opening charms only added to my
 “flame. I dreaded to examine the cause
 “of my uneasiness when I left her, or
 “the pleasure I felt in her presence; but
 “it was necessary that I should do so; and
 “I trembled with horror at my own pic-
 “ture. I tried what absence would do,
 “and remained away six months, without
 “ever seeing her. This behaviour pro-
 “duced several letters from my mother,
 “and several from my sister, reprehend-
 “ing my coolness, and chiding me in the
 “most gentle terms, for absenting myself.
 “The innocent, the virtuous maid, only
 “sought the welfare and pleasure of her
 “base and unnatural brother. I obeyed

“ the requests contained in these letters,
“ and returned home. But this visit served
“ only more effectually to make me mis-
“ erable. I could no longer doubt the ex-
“ istence of this fatal passion. I knew the
“ heinousness of my crime, and endea-
“ voured to repress all thoughts of it.
“ Unable to stay any longer in her pre-
“ sence, I left the arms of a tender mother,
“ and the affectionate embraces of a lovely
“ sister, and returned to my studies; but
“ in vain did I attempt to apply myself to
“ them. My distracted imagination could
“ receive but one idea, and that was the
“ only one which, by the laws of so-
“ ciety, nature and religion, I was for-
“ bidden to indulge. Whole days have I
“ spent in tears, and all night have I
“ lamented my wretched situation.

“ This conflict affected my spirits, and
“ brought on a severe fit of illness. Wou’d
“ to God that I had died! A long while
“ did I remain delirious, and Anna’s name
“ was

“ was ever in my mouth. When I re-
 “ covered my senses, the first object I saw
 “ was the dear girl at my bedside, admini-
 “ strating the proper things to me that had
 “ been ordered. This was more than I
 “ could bear; yet, I firmly believe her
 “ assistance contributed to restore me to my
 “ health; but my situation was intoler-
 “ able, and the only means of safety for
 “ me, was to flee from danger. This reso-
 “ lution I formed while I was yet upon the
 “ bed of sickness. A voyage to the East
 “ Indies seemed most likely to be of a long
 “ continuance; and, perhaps, from the
 “ change of climate, to prove fatal to me.
 “ Thither I determined to go.

“ When my intention was communicated
 “ to my mother, she used every argument
 “ in her power, to persuade me against
 “ the desperate attempt; Anna joined her,
 “ but all in vain; and I threatened to go as
 “ a common sailor, if she would not pro-
 “ cure me the proper necessaries. No en-

“ treaties, though all my friends interested
“ themselves on the occasion, could induce
“ me to remain in England.”

‘ Have you not,’ said they, ‘ every thing
‘ that a man can wish for; an affluent fortune,
‘ affectionate relations, and an happy
‘ independency?—What do you desire?—
‘ and why should you tempt the dangers
‘ of the seas and the vicissitude of climates?
‘ why should you subject yourself
‘ to the arbitrary command of some impetuous
‘ captain, whose insolent behaviour
‘ may occasion you much unhappiness?
‘ What urges you to seek your own destruction?’

“ Had I not cause enough? a cause sufficient
“ to make me abhor myself, the world, and every thing. But this fatal
“ secret I carefully concealed, and quitted
“ the bosom of my friend, my parent, and
“ my country; in hopes either to perish, or
“ lose the remembrance of my woes.

“ Every thing proper for my departure
“ was prepared, and I went off secretly to
“ London,

“ London, without ever taking leave of
“ my family. Well I know the tears that
“ have fallen from my worthy mother’s
“ eyes on this account: but I had not re-
“ solution enough to face her and my sister,
“ and take a last farewell. I wrote to her,
“ assigning that as the reason for my sudden
“ departure. The hurry of getting away,
“ and the novelty of my station, amused
“ my mind; and I began to form some hopes
“ of forgetting in time the evil that em-
“ bittered the happiness of my life. But
“ I deceived myself—the delusion quickly
“ vanished, when I was left to myself—I
“ saw the land lessen to my sight with trans-
“ ports of joy. When it entirely vanish-
“ ed,”—“ Thus may my guilt disappear:”
“ said I, “ thus may my criminal flame be
“ utterly extinguished,”—“ but that was not
“ so easily effected. The vulture of Pro-
“ metheus tore my liver incessantly, and
“ the worm that never died to me gnawed
“ my heart. My imagination, heated too

“ violently to cool soon again, repre-
“ sented the situation of my family in the
“ most distressing light. Should my mo-
“ ther die, my sister, my lovely help-
“ less sister would be left without a friend
“ to guard her: her fortune, which would
“ be considerable in case of my death, also
“ would tempt the hand of violence. What
“ must she do?—the thought was distrac-
“ tion! it employed my thoughts by day,
“ it returned to my dreams by night. My
“ active fancy has carried me back to those
“ delightful spots, where, once innocent and
“ pure, I have again beheld the charms of
“ a sister, and enjoyed her sprightly and
“ sensible converse, without a crime. Dan-
“ gers have presented themselves, the ready
“ arm of a brother always extricated her: I
“ snatched her to my arms, when some in-
“ vincible power has torn me from her,
“ and hurled me down precipices, whence,
“ like the rebel angels, I have thought
“ myself ages falling. When I awoke, the
“ cold sweat has stood on my brow, ago-
“ nizing

" nizing horror chilled my limbs, and my
 " guilty soul was left a prey to despair.
 " The dashing of the waves, the whistling
 " of the winds through the shrouds, the
 " creaking of the ship augmented my ter-
 " rors, and heightened my anguish. Many
 " a night have I started from my bed, and
 " endured the fury of the tempest, which
 " the boldest mariner has shrunk from, ra-
 " ther than my own distracted thoughts.
 " The greater distance I was from England,
 " the more severe was my distress. I could
 " turn my thoughts only to that spot where
 " I had experienced all the pleasure I ever
 " knew, and where alas! my woes began.
 " Careless of myself, and indifferent whe-
 " ther I survived the voyage or not, I un-
 " derwent hardships, and enured myself to
 " labours that did not at all concern me,
 " and which, by no means I had occasion
 " or was necessitated to do. This employ-
 " ment served to amuse me, whilst, at the
 " same time, it strengthened my body, and
 " accustomed me to bear fatigues.

“ My original design, when I first went
“ out, was to remain in the country : but
“ that I could not do, so great was my
“ anxiety to return home. With the first
“ ship that sailed for Europe I embarked,
“ and at last arrived at home. The kind
“ reception I met from my poor mother
“ rejoiced to see me, and the embraces of
“ my sister, only encreased the flame that
“ destroyed me. Indeed my features
“ were so much altered when I returned,
“ what from the change of climate, and
“ what from the ferocity they had contract-
“ ed in a constant war with myself; that
“ they hardly knew me. They lamented
“ the hardships I had undergone, which
“ had thus metamorphosed me ; and with
“ their tenderness and care endeavoured to
“ alleviate my past sufferings : but this
“ was throwing oil on the fire.

“ While I had been absent, Sir Andrew
“ Clements, a Baronet of good fortune
“ and ancient family, paid his addresses to
“ my

“ my sister. I began to conceive an hatred
“ to him; and, as I had no reason, sincere-
“ ly condemned myself: yet I could not
“ help viewing him in the light of a rival.
“ I found that Anna had no great regard
“ for him. He was capricious and proud;
“ vain of his talents and accomplishments;
“ and plumed himself very much on his
“ family. He had but a narrow soul; and
“ I did not believe he was formed to ren-
“ der my sister happy. However, as
“ she was a very fine woman, he was ex-
“ tremely assiduous in paying his addresses
“ to her. As I had arrived at age during
“ my being abroad, my mother made it a
“ point that I should celebrate it on my
“ return; and accordingly preparations for
“ that purpose were made, and our friends
“ were all invited. Among the rest Sir
“ Andrew Clements came, who, it was
“ imagined, would soon be allied to our
“ family, as my mother seemed to espouse
“ his cause. Amidst all the gaiety and
“ mirth

" mirth that a such a meeting occasioned,
 " I was joyless ; my own situation misera-
 " ble, unendeared with any social plea-
 " sure, presented itself to my view with
 " aggravated horror. ' Why should that
 ' love, which is in others the bond of so-
 ' ciety, the chain of happiness by which
 ' the world is linked together, be thus
 ' made a curse and misery to me ?'

' Thus did I argue with myself, and the
 " sight of Sir Andrew's gallantries and at-
 " tention to my sister but increased my
 " misery. From that hour I conceived a
 " mortal aversion to him : not that I was
 " singular in the bad opinion I had formed
 " of him, for those who had not the same
 " cause for hatred have expressed their dis-
 " like of him. Some little slights, which
 " I thought his pride occasioned, increas-
 " ed my aversion. I could not forbid him
 " the house : and my mother wished to see
 " her daughter possessed of the title of La-
 " dy Clements. I could not bear to see
 " him,

“ him, or remain with the family. Every
“ scene of domestic happiness or comfort
“ was hateful to my eyes, who was debarr-
“ ed of them all by the perverseness of
“ my cruel destiny. Too long and too
“ deeply had the unnatural passion affected
“ me to be easily eradicated. I tried, but
“ too late, the efficacy of prayer, and the
“ duties of religion. They only shewed
“ my crime in heightened colours, and I
“ fell into melancholy and despair. Ever
“ had I with the utmost care and vigilance
“ so well guarded my expressions, and re-
“ gulated my actions, that no soul ever
“ formed a conjecture at the cause of my
“ melancholy, which was visible to all the
“ world. Accustomed to pore over my
“ griefs in private, my burdened heart was
“ ready to break ; and some of my actions
“ bespoke a distempered brain.

“ As I had lucid intervals, I recollected
“ something of what I had done in my
“ frenzy, and determined to be less at
“ home

“ home than ever : for these six years I
“ have been eternally changing the scene,
“ and seeking for dissipation in hopes of
“ forgetting my misfortunes ; and conti-
“ nual exercise has restored me a little to
“ myself. Soon after I first formed this
“ plan of wandering, Sir Andrew Cle-
“ ments, hearing of some expressions that
“ I had made use of in the violence of
“ my fury and the rage of my heart,
“ which tended to vilify him, or make
“ him ridiculous, threatened me with his
“ vengeance. This came to my ears, and
“ exasperated me, then almost frantic. I
“ sought him in every place that there was
“ any probability of finding him alone in :
“ but it was very difficult to do this, for
“ hearing it reported that I was out of my
“ senses, he always shunned me. At last
“ I met him alone, and on foot. I ad-
“ dressed myself to him : ‘ You have
‘ threatened, Sir Andrew, in a very extra-
‘ ordinary manner, whenever you should
‘ meet

‘meet me to break your vengeance on
 ‘me ; this is behaviour unbecoming a
 ‘gentleman : as such I am your equal,
 ‘and shall insist on your affording me the
 ‘satisfaction you have a right to give me,
 ‘and I to demand.’

‘Yes, Sir,’ said he with a sneer, ‘when
 ‘you are in your right senses.’

‘My addressing you in this quiet and
 ‘peaceable manner argues me to be in
 ‘them now.’

‘Yes, but your comparing yourself to
 ‘me shows the contrary.’

‘Then how can you think of being al-
 ‘lied to me by marrying with my sister?’

‘Because I admire her.’

“I then told him that he must drop all
 “pretensions to her ; which he declared he
 “would not : and in the course of our con-
 “versation, he talked to me as I thought
 “rather roughly ; and not taking warning
 “when I desired him to treat me more
 ‘civilly, as we were walking together, at
 “that

“ that moment we came to a bridge that
“ was thrown over a little stream, which
“ was however pretty deep ; and he continu-
“ ing to use me ill, my rage was then at its
“ height, and I took him in my arms, and,
“ maugre all his resistance, threw him
“ over the bridge. I met some people
“ within a few yards of the spot, whom I
“ sent to his assistance. They got him
“ out, as I heard afterwards, with some dif-
“ ficulty : and he was but little hurt, tho’
“ much frightened. From that moment his
“ revenge against me has been implacable :
“ and as he has been much ridiculed in the
“ country about it, for the people do not
“ like him, he is determined to have me
“ sacrificed. He imagines me to be half
“ mad, and therein he is not mistaken :
“ and therefore prefers my being taken
“ out of the way entirely, to the precarious
“ satisfaction he would receive from a le-
“ gal prosecution. Twice have his bra-
“ voes attempted me before that time when
“ you

“ you so generously came to my assistance.
“ I saw you surprised at my manner of
“ treating those fellows : but I had repent-
“ ed of the violence I used towards the
“ man that hired them, and thrice have I
“ forgiven him. If he should again pre-
“ sume upon my lenity, I will not spare
“ him. You also thought me strange and
“ churlish for refusing to accept those ci-
“ vilities which the father of the boy I
“ saved would have forced upon me : but
“ could I, the victim of anguish and de-
“ spair, enjoy a scene of felicity which I
“ can never hope to partake ? The com-
“ parison between my wretched state and
“ his almost drove me to frenzy. I have
“ now opened my heart to you, Rigby :
“ be my friend, and do not hate me.
“ I have struggled as much as man can
“ do against this fatal, this destructive de-
“ fire ; and my reason and happiness have
“ fallen the sacrifice to it. I mean to
“ take you home with me, and introduce
“ you

“ you to my mother and sister. My unac-
“ countable conduct, which is supposed to
“ be the consequence of a distracted brain,
“ is the cause of great unhappiness to
“ them both. Be it your task to speak com-
“ fort to my afflicted parent: sooth her
“ sorrows, and give her hopes of my re-
“ turning to reason and peace. In every
“ thing, thou worthy young man, I will
“ take thy advice with regard to my fu-
“ ture conduct. My heart is much at-
“ tached to thee; and if, from the strict
“ rectitude of your notions, and your ad-
“ herence to the laws of honour, you shall
“ break off your connections with me,
“ yet I trust to that honour to conceal the
“ cause of my behaviour from the world;
“ and if you should hate me for my uninten-
“ tional guilt, yet surely thy compassionate
“ heart will not refuse to pity me.”

He ceased; and Rigby sat motionless,
lost in thought, and froze with horror at
the recital of the dreadful story. His eyes
were

were fixed on the ground, and his breast heaved with heartfelt sighs. His imagination represented to him at once the fatal consequence of this unnatural passion. He saw the object of its violence before him, and only beheld the ruins of a man who promised, in the early part of his life, to be an ornament to society, and a comfort to his friends. He had never heard of such a thing before ; for he considered the fictions of the poets, who described such a scene of horror, as only calculated to inspire a detestation of the crime. Astonishment therefore tied his tongue, and he remained silent.

Hillaston looked at him attentively, and saw, in his expressive countenance, the emotions of his soul. "Had you known," said he, "the pain I have suffered, as well
"in the relation of this dismal fact, as
"the bringing myself to a resolution of
"communicating it, you would be more
"inclined to offer me your consolation.
" But

“ But I must not expect that, or any other
“ comfort. Alas ! I am a wretch equally
“ detested by God and man, and must ne-
“ ver know what peace is, or the kindly
“ confidence of a friend !”

He rose. His motion, as well as his words, wakened Rigby from the trance in which he was meditating on the story he had heard, — “ Despair,” said he, starting up, “ is equally the destruction of the
“ body and soul. Avoid it, my friend,
“ for such you are ; and shall be ever to
“ me,” added he, embracing him. “ The
“ band of affliction shall but unite our
“ souls the closer : and never shall you
“ have cause to repent your confidence in
“ me. Though I have as yet been a stranger
“ to adversity, I know not what woes may
“ be in reserve for me.—Yes, Hillaston,
“ my hand and my heart are devoted to
“ you ; henceforward we shall be more use-
“ ful to each other.—From my soul I
“ pity, I commiserate you, and doubt not
“ but

“but time may make a happy change in
 “your sentiments and your affections.
 “One great stroke in your favour is, your
 “having eased your heart of its burden,
 “by communicating the cause of your
 “distresses to a friend; it is half a cure.
 “Be of good comfort: this dreadful cloud,
 “that has, with black and dismal aspect,
 “thrown this horrid gloom over the for-
 “mer part of your days, may yet be dis-
 “pelled, and the bright ray of peace and tran-
 “quillity, once more shine on your distract-
 “ed soul. I will use every endeavour in
 “my power to restore you to happiness
 “and joy.”

Hillaston looked at him for a little time
 after he had ceased.—“I am not deceived
 “in you,” said he, his heart overwhelmed
 with tender sensations.—“You are the gene-
 “rous, the kind, the compassionate man
 “I took you for. I may yet be happy,”
 added he, the big tear trickling down his
 cheek, “and you may be the cause of it.—
 “For-

"Forgive me, Rigby, I am not easily
"moved thus."

He snatched him to his swelling breast,
and promising to return soon again, de-
parted, to compose himself.



BOOK VII.

WHEN Hillaſton went away, Rigby
threw himſelf into his chair, to
reflect on what had paſſed. Many and
various were the thoughts that racked his
brain. He pitied his friend from his
heart. Dreadful and horrible as the paſſion
he confeſſed was, yet every thing that he
could do was tried to expell it from his
breſt. Nor did he indulge the deteſtable,
the unnatural flame. The conflict he en-
dured was viſible to every body, though
none but he knew the cauſe. But, when
he conſidered that a ſiſter was the object of
his guilty deſires, his blood ran cold, and
horror

horror seized his heart. He had not as yet known the power of that passion, which either constitutes the happiness or misery of a man's life; and could but badly judge of its force, though he had such a melancholy example of its effects. He, at all events, determined to use his utmost efforts to banish this passion from his friend's breast; and, though there was little likelihood of it then, he did not despair of being able to accomplish it in time. But he concluded that would depend on accident more than any thing else; and, if it were possible some other woman could be found, amiable enough to engage his affections, thought that would be the most efficacious means of effecting his cure. He formed a notion of what he must suffer by the pain he felt himself, and the dreadful agitations the fearful story had occasioned in his own bosom when related. "Thank God," said he, "that I have no sister, or, perhaps, I might be as truly wretched as my friend.

“ My uncontrollable passions might seek
 “ the same object that his have done, and
 “ I be rendered another monster, for the
 “ pity and detestation of the astonished
 “ world. Once more let my thanks ascend
 “ to Heaven, that has removed this acci-
 “ dental cause of sin from me; for I am
 “ as weak and liable to fall as others.”

Till Hillaſton returned to him again,
 which happened in the courſe of a week,
 he employed himſelf almoſt wholly in think-
 ing of him. He received him with great
 affection: and the unhappy Hillaſton ſeemed
 more eaſy than he had been ſince he firſt
 became acquainted with his young friend.
 “ I return to you now, my dear Rigby,
 “ with an heart more light than it has been
 “ for many years. Your kind conſolation
 “ is a balm to my afflicted ſoul, and your
 “ participation of my woes has eaſed me
 “ of half the load; I find ſo great a
 “ change in myſelf, that my deſpondence
 “ begins to give way, and I conceive hopes
 “ that

“that I may yet be happy enough to meet
“peace and tranquillity.”

“Fear it not,” replied Rigby; “that
“hope will go a great way to effect a cure.
“Yet you must be weaned from this un-
“happy affection by gentle means. The
“mind, when wounded, must be cured
“like the wounds of the body; a remedy
“that operates and heals too hastily, never
“has a proper effect; the malady confined
“in one place breaks out in another.
“Strong though your passions are, and,
“long as you have laboured under this
“affliction, yet your reason is not impaired;
“your senses are in their full perfection,
“and you have a sound judgment. There
“is a great analogy also in the effects that
“disorders of the mind and the body have
“on us. In proportion to the strength of
“our nerves, or our corporal powers, a
“fever shall rack us more violently than
“if we were weak and enervated. Our
“spirits too, as experience teaches us, have

“a wondrous effect upon our bodies.
“You are a remarkable instance of the
“truth of these maxims, and the violence
“of this dreadful passion has kept you in
“eternal torment; and none more poignant
“than your self-condemnation. Open
“your heart to me, Hillaſton; let us probe
“this wound to the bottom, before we
“pretend to heal it.”

“Have I not opened it entirely to you?
“have I not diſplayed my crime and my
“ſufferings?”

“You have: and every ſymptom that
“may indicate a relapſe you muſt alſo
“communicate, for I will be your mind’s
“phyſician.”

Hillaſton found great relief from his friend’s converſation; and in about a week after, propoſed to him, to go along with him to ſee his mother. He conſented, and they ſet off as uſual on foot, as the houſe was not twenty miles from the univerſity.

“You

“ You will now,” said Hillaſton, “ ſee
 “ my mother and the ſiſter who has occa-
 “ ſioned, innocently occaſioned, all my miſ-
 “ fortunes: however I may act, take no no-
 “ tice of my behaviour; but ſtay there with
 “ them two or three days. I promiſe you,
 “ they will treat you with great care and
 “ attention. I may not remain there three
 “ hours, and I may ſtay the whole day;
 “ but I ſhall not ſleep there: for that reaſon,
 “ we will ſtop at an inn within three miles
 “ of the houſe, and go there in the morn-
 “ ing before breakfast.”

“ Is it not poſſible,” demanded Rigby,
 “ for you to ſtay there with me? for I ſhall
 “ cut an awkward figure by myſelf: beſides,
 “ if you could only uſe yourſelf to her com-
 “ pany and converſation for a ſhort time,
 “ you would be more thoroughly ſenſible
 “ of your ſituation: your reaſon would come
 “ more effectually to your aid, and point
 “ out the impoſſibility of ever gratifying the
 “ paſſion you have ſo unhappily conceived,

“and so fatally nourished, for so long a
“time.”

“Ah! Rigby,” said he, “I cannot do it:
“I have endeavoured to accustom myself
“to hear her, to see her, to reflect that
“she is my sister, and that I am most unna-
“tural and monstrous. The consequence
“has been that my frenzy has returned
“on me with more fury than before, and
“driven me to the greatest extremities. I
“have lain whole nights in the fields with-
“out any covering but the heavens, or any
“pillow but the earth: yet I have never
“suffered any inconvenience from these
“hardships; on the contrary, I have grown
“more robust and able to endure them.
“But now I am determined to act more
“discreetly, and convince those who ima-
“gine me to be deprived of my reason,
“that I am yet, thank God, in the perfect
“enjoyment of my senses, and as capable
“of performing my duties in life as any
“body.”

Rigby

Rigby commended this resolution in him, condemning his indulging his passions, which only served to increase his woe.

“ I will do every thing I can,” replied he; “ but the evil is too deeply rooted in my heart, to be easily displaced. If I should not be able to maintain my ground and stay there, yet I am convinced you will be treated with peculiar respect; for my mother will imagine me to be recovered by going again into society: and you are the only person whom for a long time I have comforted with: I would have you reinspire my worthy and beloved parent with hopes, and you will still render yourself more agreeable to her.”

Hillaston conducted Rigby to the inn where he was to sleep that night, and as he was well known thereabouts, was treated with great care and tenderness by the people, who were equally pleased and surprised to see him with a companion: they were also more astonished at seeing him demean him-

self in a more sociable manner than he had done for many years. In the morning they repaired to his house, and having arrived there pretty early, Hillaston sent up word to his mother and sister, who were not yet risen, that he and a friend were come to breakfast, and spend the day with them.

“While they are preparing themselves,” Rigby, said he, “we will go and take a walk in the garden.”

He consented, and had an opportunity of viewing the house by that means. It was built in the modern taste: was elegant and commodious, seated on an eminence, which commanded a pleasing though not an extensive prospect. The gardens were laid out in a pretty taste: but there seemed to be an air of wildness and negligence in the whole that required a master’s eye and care to remedy and remove.

“This is a sweet place,” said Rigby.

“Yes,

“ Yes, it is capable of many improvements, and might be rendered very agreeable; but some future possessor must make it so, for I cannot.”

They strolled about, and in a very short time a servant acquainted Mr. Hillaston, and his friend, that the ladies waited for them. They followed him into the parlour where breakfast was prepared, and Rigby was introduced to Mrs. and Miss Hillaston. The former, though a little advanced in years, had yet the remains of beauty, and preserved a great deal of dignity in her manner and deportment; but there was sorrow visibly expressed in her countenance that seemed to prey on her spirits. The latter was about five and twenty, extremely genteel in her person, and her face was very handsome, but she appeared to partake of her mother's grief, for melancholy dimmed her bright eyes; her air was languid, her aspect dejected. Hillaston saluted both his mother and sis-

ter, and made the kindest enquiries concerning their healths; which they returned in the most affectionate and tender manner. He recommended his friend to them, who intended, he told them, to stay two or three days to bear them company. The conversation became a little more general between them, whilst Hillaston sat buried in thought, and maintained a profound silence. Rigby found Mrs. Hillaston and her daughter to possess a great deal of polite knowledge and sound judgment.

Hillaston interrupted the conversation, by asking his friend, if he would take a walk about the grounds; which he agreed to; and they left the ladies to dress themselves against dinner.

When they had got a convenient distance from the house, Hillaston stopped short, and looking very stedfastly at his friend, asked him his opinion of his sister.

“I think her a very amiable girl indeed;
“but she is your sister.”

“I know

“ I know it, I know it too well,” said he with a groan ; “ and there is an insuperable bar put to all my hopes. Detested wretch that I am, to form such— ! more horrible to utter them ! The day should be obscured, the sun cease to shine on such a monster ! But every thing is dark and abominable to me. You would like her, Rigby, if you knew the virtues of her soul so well as I do.”

“ She has many perfections, no doubt ; but are there not others who have as many ? Look on some woman who even possesses them in an inferior degree : there are many who are truly amiable ; and your choice of whom neither religion, nature, nor reason, can oppose. Unite yourself to such a one. Your domestic concerns, your children, the tender and indispensable duties annexed to a father and an husband, will divert your attention, and in time you will forget this unhappy delusion. The force of the tor-

“rent that cannot be stopped or dammed
 “up, is always weakened by dividing the
 “stream into many channels. Let your
 “affections be turned upon some other ob-
 “ject, though less worthy; and though there
 “may not at first be much passion; yet
 “when you find yourself eased of the load
 “that oppresses you, you will love the wo-
 “man who has been the means of rescuing
 “you from so much misery.”

“Ah, Rigby, to what do you advise
 “me? Yet your intention is good, and
 “your counsel is wholesome. Whom can
 “I address? or can I think that—? But I
 “must not think; for madness will fol-
 “low. Your experiment shall be tried: I
 “will endeavour.”

Rigby tried every argument in his power
 to persuade him; and he found less diffi-
 culty in prevailing on him to attempt it,
 than he thought for: He changed the sub-
 ject insensibly; and they chatted about the
 different parts of the country, in a very
 agree-

agreeable manner, till the hour of dinner approached.

When they returned, they found their repast ready ; which bespoke the taste and hospitality of their fair entertainers. During and after dinner Hillaston seemed to throw off his reserve, and behaved more sociably than he had done of a long time. The effect this change in him had upon his mother and sister was very evident in their countenances ; and their spirits seemed to revive, in proportion as his sense and reason returned. The affectionate mother thanked Rigby with her eyes, to whom she attributed this alteration in her son. Miss Hillaston treated him in the most courteous manner ; and though her brother had frequent returns of his habitual gloom, they did not last long : for he was pleased to see his friend so well received, and his mind had a transient suspension of woe. The evening was spent in the most happy intercourse ; and Miss Hillaston indulged her
guest

guest with several airs on the harpsichord, which she was a great mistress of, and accompanied with her voice. He could not help observing that she always chose the most plaintive and tender songs, which suited her voice, it being weak, but sweet and harmonious. There was something most expressive and penetrating in her manner, and her brother was transported at the sounds. In due time they retired to rest; and Rigby found every thing very genteel and good in the house, and enjoyed a sweet repose.

When he arose in the morning he learn'd that his friend had gone away before day; this did not much surprize him: he thought that there was a good step towards his recovery already taken by his sleeping there that night. He met the ladies at the breakfast table. After the common salutations of the morning, Mrs. Hilston told him she was very sorry her son was gone away, but hoped that would be
no

no reason for his making his visit shorter than he at first intended. Rigby assured them he would not.—“We will endeavour to entertain you, Sir, as agreeably as we can,” said Miss Hillaiston, “in my brother’s absence.”—Rigby bowed.

“Ah, Sir,” said the old lady, “you can be no stranger to my son’s distraction that makes him act in this manner. But for that, I should be the happiest woman—but to see my child in this melancholy condition, destroys all thoughts of enjoyment of any pleasure, and comfort is a stranger to me.”

She was obliged to wipe away the starting tear—her daughter’s eyes were suffused, nor was Rigby unaffected—Silence ensued.

“It is very shocking, indeed, Madam,” said he, after a long pause, “but it is to be hoped that this may not continue; of late I have observed him more sociable, and less flighty, and in time he may re-
“ turn

“ turn to his reason, and be, once more, a
 “ pleasure and happiness to his family.”

“ Oh Sir, my prayers are eternally as-
 “ cending to heaven to work that great
 “ change—and since I see that he has at-
 “ tached himself to your society, I have
 “ conceived more hopes of it than ever.—
 “ Indeed his behaviour last night was more
 “ mild and reasonable than I have seen a
 “ long time. Had you but known him
 “ before this melancholy seized him, you
 “ would have liked him.—He was amiable
 “ in his person—gentle in his manners—
 “ He was beloved by every body—a du-
 “ tiful son—an affectionate brother”.

“ Yes,” interrupted Miss Hillaston,
 “ when he was ill and delirious, my name
 “ was never out of his mouth.”

“ Ah, since that fever,” resumed Mrs.
 Hillaston, “ he has not been in his right
 “ reason—He would go, in spite of all our
 “ intreaties, to the East Indies: and he
 “ came home so altered and changed from
 “ what

“ what he had been, there was no knowing
 “ him. — He shunned all company : but,
 “ since he has been in Berkshire, as he in-
 “ formed me he spent a great part of last
 “ summer there with you, Sir, I begin to
 “ form some hopes of his return to rea-
 “ son — And, what is very astonishing,
 “ there can be no cause assigned for this
 “ alteration in him.”

“ Then it is more to be expected that
 “ he may yet recover himself, Madam : he
 “ certainly has expressed a great regard for
 “ me, and I shall do every thing in my
 “ power to procure him any pleasure, or to
 “ divert him from his present flightiness ;
 “ but I really think he is better than when
 “ I first knew him.”

The ladies joined him in opinion, by
 declaring he was so ; and Rigby's confi-
 dence in his approaching recovery, gave
 them great spirits, and made him a very
 agreeable companion to them, as they could
 freely talk of his misfortunes to his friend.

He

He passed this day with them more pleasantly than the former, as they were all better acquainted, and their reserve worn off.—The next day he begg'd leave to depart, which was permitted, on his promising to come and see them soon again. The old lady, with whom he was a great favourite, for taking such a part in her son's concerns, insisted on his coming; and declared, they would esteem his quick return as a proof of his friendship and liking for the family. Rigby assured them of his regard and good wishes for their happiness, and thanking them for their extraordinary civilities to him, marched homeward. He expected that Hillafton would have met him on the road, but he was disappointed, nor did he see him for a week afterwards. When he came it gave him much pleasure to hear his friend praise his mother and sister, and to find that he had given them some hopes of his recovering his reason. He embraced him with great fervency, and
thanked

thanked him for his kindness. Rigby congratulated him on his resolution, and proposed going over soon again—It was agreed to on his part, and they fix'd their journey for the latter end of April, then about three weeks distant, intending to spend seven or eight days there; and Hillaston agreed, if he could not find himself able to remain the whole time, that he would come as often as possible during his stay there. Rigby saw him again before the day they had appointed to set off on; and as he found him still more easy and composed, began to form the most sanguine expectations of recovering him from that fatal gulf in which he had so long been plunged.

The day at length came, and they set off together — It was spring, and the most delightful part of that season.—Every object communicated pleasure and inspired joy. Rigby, naturally chearful, felt the powerful influence of the returning year,
and

and was all spirits; his conversation had an effect upon Hillaston's gloom, who was much exhilarated by his friend's pleasantry. They proposed to be time enough for dinner at Mrs. Hillaston's, who had been apprised of their coming by her son.

With great satisfaction and pleasure she saw them arrive; for she conceived that her son's fondness for Rigby's company would effect a happy change in his disposition. The jocund Rigby, full of pleasure in the hopes of doing his friend and his family very essential service, in redeeming him from the bondage of that detested passion, was in a situation most susceptible of the tenderest impressions; and he found in the face and person of Maria Leeson the first cause of them in his breast. She was a visitor at Mrs. Hillaston's: and poor Rigby never saw any thing female before, that he liked half so well. She was about eighteen: but her youth, from the good examples and precepts of her parents, had
been

been furnished with such instruction, that she was a woman in every point of useful and polite knowledge: her mind, where the virtues grew spontaneously, had received the greatest improvement; and never was a pure soul inclosed in a more elegant body. Her form was faultless; her shape was perfect symmetry; nor was the beauty of her face inferior to her corporal elegance. Lively and wild, her sparkling eyes captivated the beholders. Her chearfulness, the consequence of innocence, gave a lustre to her charms, as the rays of the sun add beauty to a prospect, by gilding the scene, and heightening the colours.

Hillaston introduced Rigby to the charming girl, and he then first felt himself uneasy from an unknown cause: his sprightliness, in a manner, forsook him; and his friend seemed to have picked it up, for never had Hillaston been so amusing before. After dinner they disengaged themselves from the ladies: and Rigby was very
anxious

anxious to learn who Miss Leeson was, that had affected him so strongly, and at first sight too. He learned that she was the eldest daughter of Mr. Leeson, who lived in the next county; a gentleman of good estate, who had two more daughters and a son—that they were much respected and esteemed, and that there was a strict friendship between his sister and Maria.—“Indeed,” added Hillaston, “she is a most worthy good girl, I have a great esteem for her, and you will like her much when you come to know her better.”

“That may be,” said Rigby; “but I think she is much to be admired from the first view.”

“Ho, ho, you’re caught then.”

“I don’t know as to that, but she is a very lovely girl.”

“If you think so now, she’ll be divine before the week’s out.”

They return’d to tea, and found the ladies waiting for them. Mrs. and Miss Hillaston

Hillaſton paid the greateſt attention to Rigby, whom they looked upon as their beſt friend, and by whoſe means they ſhould once more ſee happineſs, in the reſtoration of Mr. Hillaſton ; but Miſs Leeſon was the only object that he had eyes or ears for. Her gaiety inſpired the whole company, and Rigby began to aſſume his chearfulneſs. But he drank large draughts of love : and ſo delightful and bewitching were his ſenſations, that he abandoned himſelf to his paſſion without even ſtruggling. The evening was paſſed in the greateſt harmony, but the next morning Hillaſton went away. —Rigby endeavoured to comfort his mother, by aſſuring her he had promiſed to return again before the week was out, perhaps in a day or two. In the abſence of his friend he rambled about with the two girls, who were extremely well pleaſed with their companion—He was all life and ſpirits : Maria was the ſame : and their united endeavours to divert, diſſipated Miſs Hillaſton's

laston's chagrin, and she became merry. Rigby never was so happy before.—The little innocent freedoms which he was allowed to take with his fair companions, increased his flame for Maria; and when in their walks she lean'd on one arm, and Miss Hillaston on the other, his heart palpitated with great velocity.

In the evenings their chief amusement was music, in which the two ladies excelled; and their different stile and manner delighted Rigby. It has been before observed that Miss Hillaston chose the most plaintive and moving airs. When she played and sang, our lover, yet in his novice, felt the force of the pleasing sounds. They penetrated to his heart. He suffered the pangs of slighted love, and his hopes decayed as the enchanting tones died away in his ears. But this melancholy and tender languor was banished, when the charming Maria's fingers touched the trembling strings. Miss Hillaston sang
the

the torments of hopeless passion: Maria chanted the triumphs of beauty.

“ Sounds, tho’ charming, can’t relieve thee,

“ Do not, shepherd, then deceive thee,

“ Music is the voice of love.”

Rigby’s agitated soul confessed the truth of it. His animated eyes spoke his sensations, and every pulse beat time, with sympathetic vibrations, to the magic sounds. All was tumultuous joy, was agonizing rapture. There was something in her voice, which was clear, sweet, and strong, that penetrated his soul. Yet he could not sit still while she sang or played; his spirits were set in motion by the harmony; they affected his nerves, and shame only prevented his expressing their force by capering about.

The pleasure he experienced from her skill in playing made her still more lovely in his eyes, and more dear to his heart. A union with so much perfection would be true happiness. He found that he

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loved her, that he was uneasy when he was out of her sight, and could think of nothing else.

Rigby, though not bred in courts, had an easy and natural politeness, which made him an agreeable and desirable companion. He was more especially calculated for the service of the fair sex, with whom a good temper, and chearful behaviour, are very often the greatest recommendations. The ladies, who were pleased with his good-humour, treated him with more familiarity than they would have done one who was proud and reserved in his manner, or morose in his disposition. This condescension was fatal to poor Rigby, who, by that means, had an opportunity of contemplating Maria's personal charms and mental virtues more nearly. He found that, as Hillaston had foretold, he esteemed her almost divine. He loved, and with an ardor that he could not, did not wish to controul. But to remain without telling
the

the fair object of his affections what he felt, would be ridiculous and absurd; he therefore determined to inform her of the passion he had conceived for her: but how to do it he knew not; for he dreaded being exposed to her wit and merriment, upon the declaration of his love, should he do it in a serious manner, and with a doleful face. He trusted to chance for the opportunity, and resolved to seize the first that should present itself.

His particularity and attention to Maria had not escaped the girl's notice, and Miss Hillaston could not avoid congratulating her friend on the conquest she had made.

“Why shou'd you think so?”

“I have many reasons; and it is my
 “opinion, Maria, he will soon tell you
 “so himself. His eyes have made the se-
 “cret known already, even to you, or
 “I am very much mistaken. His atten-
 “tion to you is very remarkable; and
 “I'll be hang'd if he does not wish you

“to notice it.—But what do you think of
“him?”

“Why, the man’s well enough.”

“Come, come, Maria, I know you
“think better of him than that. My
“brother is very lavish in his praise; and,
“indeed, he seems to be a very worthy
“young gentleman. I am sure we are
“under very great obligations to him, for
“the care he takes of my brother, who
“has made him his only companion; and,
“since he has been acquainted with him,
“has been less flighty than I have seen
“him these seven years.”

“That may be a very good reason why
“you should like him, Anna, but none
“why I should.—And pray, am I to be
“fond of every one who chances to take
“a liking to my pretty face? If that were
“to be the case, upon my word I should
“have enough to do.”

“No, no, Maria; if you can take a
“fancy to one, it will be full enough.”

“Let

“ Let me see him then.”

“ I believe you have seen him already,
“ and Mr. Rigby is the man.”

“ Then you know more than I do—But
“ let us change the subject.”

Thus did the happy, the innocent females, impart their sentiments to each other : but, though Hillaſton came three times during the week that Rigby had been there, yet could not the latter communicate to his unhappy friend the feelings of his heart, or the violence of his paſſion, leſt he ſhould rekindle the embers of the fatal flame which he conceived and hoped were dying in his boſom. However, Hillaſton, though an unnatural deluſion had obſcured his reaſon on one ſide, had great ſagacity, and quickly perceived what paſſed in his friend's breaſt. He let him know that he was acquainted with it; and that any one, with the leaſt penetration, could not longer remain ignorant of it. Rigby bluſhed as he confeſſed the truth of his friend's ob-

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ſervation;

servation; but defended himself by saying, that even he confessed her worthy of any person's affection.

"I did so," replied Hillafton, "and still
"I say so. You may be happy as you can
"wish: there is every probability, if her
"heart is not engaged, that you may win
"it. There are no reasons, if her pa-
"rents can be induced, as I doubt not
"but they may, to consent to your union,
"why your love may not be sanctified by
"connubial vows. You may yet be
"blessed, Rigby; and that you may, is
"my sincerest wish, and shall be my con-
"stant prayer. But I fear I am doomed
"to misery, as well in this world as the
"next. Though, despondent as I am, I
"hope that I have experienced woes suffi-
"cient in this state, to purge away all my
"guilt; and that my future torments will
"be remitted, wretch that I am."

Rigby interposed, and endeavoured to
recal his thoughts from this destructive
channel.

channel. He strove to soothe and heal his sorrows in vain; the remembrance of what he then, and had long suffered, came fresh upon him. The flood that had been nearly dammed up, broke over its bounds, and deluged his heart: he stretched out his hand to his friend.

“ Ah, Rigby!” said he, as he shook him by the hand, “ this contest is too powerful for your friend: it will end in his destruction at last. I find myself less able to maintain the conflict, when every reasonable argument, both human and divine, rise to oppose me. How long shall you stay here?”

“ Two or three days more.”

“ In a week I will see you at Cambridge again: Fare you well till then: I can stay here no longer.”

Every tender and humane sentiment in Rigby’s bosom was interested in his friend’s behalf: He regarded, he pitied him.

80 THE HISTORY OF

“It is true,” said he, “that perhaps I
“may succeed in my love; and if I do,
“shall be truly happy. There are none of
“those dreary clouds before me that ob-
“struct his view, and destroy his peace.
“And even should I meet her scorn, or
“find it impossible to gain her affection;
“yet I shall not suffer the aggregated mis-
“fortune of entertaining a criminal passion
“for a sister.”

Mrs. Hillaston, who had not seen her son so often in such a short space of time as during Rigby's residence at her house, courted his company, and intreated him to stay as long as suited his convenience; in hopes of drawing the wretched wanderer home again, and by that means restoring him to himself.

When she spoke to him on this head, he informed her of his appointment to meet him at Cambridge within a week. As she thought it would be wrong to prevent their
meeting,

meeting, hoping such good effects from associating together, she consented to his going within that time ; only demanding a promise to return soon again, in hopes of having the pleasure of seeing her beloved son the oftener, through his means.

All that remained for him now was, to seek the opportunity of telling the adorable Maria his fondness for her, which he suffered to be the ruling passion of his heart. Already had two days elapsed, and he had not been able to effect his design. On the third, as he was walking in the garden with the two girls, Mrs. Hillaston sent a servant to acquaint her daughter that she wanted her. Maria remained with Rigby. Now the moment that he had long expected was come ; and, *Spare to speak, and spare to speed*, was so self-evident a truth, that he determined, at all events, to tell his passion to his charming mistress. He revolved many beginnings in his mind ; none would do. But what his reason and

reflection could not have furnished him with, a couple of cock-sparrows afforded him, who, engaged in eager combat, alighted almost at the feet of the young couple, to finish their engagement. The hen, who was the cause and reward of the battle, stood by; and when one of the heroes was worsted, flew off with the conqueror. The other, after recovering himself, flew away likewise. Rigby and the fair Maria were silent witnesses of this scene.

“Go your ways, you are a happy fellow,” said he, with a sigh.

“You cannot mean the bird who flew away last.”

“I do indeed, Madam.”

“That is something extraordinary; for he has been beaten, and has lost his mistress into the bargain: And do you think him happy?”

“Certainly, Madam; for he has not reflection to shew him the greatness of his loss. It is only for man to love sincerely;

“cerely; and, slighted, to be wretched.

“His judgment compares the difference of
“his situation, and places the contrast of
“being blessed with the object of his affection, or disregarded by her, in the strongest colours. Memory retains the images,
“and all his boasted superiority in rational powers over the brute creation, only conspires to increase his misery.”

“This is a very melancholy picture you have drawn, Sir, of a man in love.”

“It is a very faithful one, Madam; and what, I fear, may be my lot. It is the picture of a man possessed of an hopeless passion, which he nourishes in his breast to his own destruction.”

“Upon my word, Mr. Rigby, I should be sorry any acquaintance of mine should labour under such complicated woes. But I cannot imagine, from the cheerfulness of your disposition, that you are in such a desperate state. I thought lovers were always sad, and melancholy, and

“fretful, and peevish; on the contrary,

“you are all good humour and spirit. I

“cannot credit your assertions at all.”

“And therein consists my unhappiness.”

“How so, in the name of wonder!”

“Because, lovely Maria, when I tell you,

“as I now do, in the sincerity of my soul,

“that I am a victim to your charms, and

“that my heart feels the tenderest passion

“for you that ever virtue and honour in-

“spired, you have already prejudiced me;

“and the unfortunate cheerfulness of my

“disposition is assigned as the cause why

“you will not believe my declarations.

“On my word, Miss Leeson, I shall have

“sufficient cause to be less merry for the

“future.”

“And upon my word, Mr. Rigby,”

said she, laughing, “I do not see any reason

“why you should not be as merry as ever.

“Come; you must not suppose that I have

“lived so long without having many ad-

“mirers; and if I have deprived them of

“all

“all their gaiety, had they been as agree-
 “able as you, I should have been a public
 “nuisance.”

“Perhaps they have been more favour-
 “ed.”

“Oh, not a bit, I assure you. For I
 “look upon the most part of these address-
 “es to be a customary gallantry, which
 “every polite man shews to a woman
 “whose face pleases him, and which ought
 “by no means to be considered in a serious
 “light.”

“Ah, Madam, at that rate you make
 “no difference between the professions of
 “your admirers; for I am sure you must
 “have many. And, though you treat
 “them all alike, yet there is not much jus-
 “tice in your proceeding: for surely some
 “must deserve better than others.”

“I must have that proved to me.”

“Give me leave to enter the lists then,
 “lovely Maria; and if the prize is to be
 “your favour, I make no doubt of being
 “victor.”

“I

“ I cannot prevent you, Sir,” said she, with an engaging smile ; “ and am sure your merit will intitle you to a more noble reward.”

“ I wish you may think so : but I can have none I covet so much, or would endure more to gain, than your heart. My sincerity and constancy will convince you of the truth of my passion.”

Miss Hillaston’s appearing in sight, interrupted the conversation, which now took a general turn ; and soon after they went in doors.

Happy as Rigby was in having communicated the secret of his heart to Maria, and though he had met nothing forbidding in her manner which deprived him of hope ; yet he had lost his gaiety, and could not, for the soul of him, recal his spirits. The ladies observed, and rallied him on it : And Maria took an opportunity of telling him in private, with a significant smile, that

that if he had lost his heart, she hoped he had not lost his chearfulness too.

This encouragement restored him a little to himself, and he again resumed his good-humour. The next day, just after they had done breakfast, a servant brought a letter to Miss Leeson. With permission she opened it, and the contents informed her that her mother was exceedingly ill, and, as it was apprehended, in some danger; therefore she was desired to return immediately. Maria was dreadfully alarmed at this intelligence, and giving way to natural affection, burst into tears. Rigby, who watched every motion of her countenance, saw, with the greatest concern, her grief and affliction. Except the mere shedding of tears, a stranger would have imagined that he had received the melancholy news; so much was he shocked at his Maria's trouble. When it was proper to speak to her, he addressed her in the most soothing language, and offered every poor condol-

lance

lance in his power. She was pleased and affected with his tenderness, but declined his offer of accompanying her any part of the way home, and set out with the servant, who was sent with a post-chaise for her, in less than half an hour after she had received the account of her mother's illness.

Rigby, who admired her in the midst of her gaiety, adored her in the hour of distress. He thought her tears heightened her beauty, his compassionate heart felt for her situation, and his concern for her grief but shewed the force and extent of his passion. It is not to be supposed that he was either a pleasing or entertaining companion after her departure. He could not say a word; and was reduced to the necessity of feigning himself ill, to excuse his want of spirits. Miss Hillaston saw through his behaviour, and pitied him. At his request she sat down to her harpsichord in the afternoon, with a view of diverting him: but the tender sounds were so adapted to his

his feelings, that his eyes overflowed with involuntary tears. Yet they soothed him, and reduced his turbid mind to a more tranquil state.

When he retired to rest he slept not, his thoughts were turned only upon the charming, the afflicted Maria. He knew that he should have a chance of seeing her again at Mrs. Hillaſton's, and that afforded him ſome comfort: indeed, it was the only one he then had.

In the morning he took his leave of Miſs Hillaſton and her mother, who did not preſs him to ſtay any longer, as they knew he went to meet her ſon. Returning them his thanks for their kindneſs to him, and aſſuring them of his intention and readineſs to ſerve them in every ſhape, he ſet off for Cambridge. The reflection of Maria beguiled the way, and his ſenſes were entirely employed in the contemplation of her charms. Hillaſton came, as he had promiſed, in the week; and preſſing him

him concerning the success of his amour with Miss Leeson, Rigby could not forbear making him a confidant, and imparted the whole affair to him.

“ Well,” said he, “ I see no reason why
“ you should be dejected about this matter :
“ you have received no disagreeable answer,
“ though her treatment may not be so favourable as you may wish. I will learn
“ some news for you, how matters stand.
“ I shall go home, and spend a week there,
“ or in the neighbourhood ; and my sister,
“ who keeps up a constant correspondence
“ with Miss Leeson, will inform me if she
“ says any thing about you : besides, as
“ she made so short a stay at our house, it
“ is very likely she will return soon again,
“ and then we will go and see her.”

“ I should be very glad to know that
“ circumstance,” said Rigby ; “ for I
“ should like to see her once more before
“ I go into Berkshire, which I shall do as
“ soon as these two terms are over.”

“ You

“ You shall certainly know ; and I will
“ go home with you, if she does not come
“ into this part of the country.”

Rigby assured him the proposal was extremely agreeable to him. He spent three or four days with his friend, and then set off, to procure him the desired intelligence. In about a fortnight he returned, and told him what he had learned at home ; that Maria did not expect to be at liberty to visit his sister again that summer, as Mrs. Leeson, though she had got the better of her illness, was still so weak and low, that she required the care and attention of a daughter : that she spoke very favourably of him in her letters, and hoped, about the latter end of September, to spend at least a month with her.

This news gave great pleasure to Rigby, and made him determine, as soon the vacation commenced, to go to Berkshire ; and accordingly, the two friends set out on foot
again

again for farmer Wilkins's, where, it is unnecessary to say, they were well received.

Mrs. Wilkins had communicated to her husband Hillaſton's behaviour to their daughter: and, the firſt opportunity they had, both returned him thanks, and told him, that the Pitman family had broke off with theirs, and they never ſaw the ſon. Rigby had the mortification to find his mother in a bad ſtate of health; and, as it was apprehended, in a decline. He did every thing that natural tenderneſs and affection could ſuggeſt, to amuſe and relieve her.

Among thoſe who were pleaſed at the return of our friends, Hannah Wilkins was not the leaſt. The apparent diſtraction of Hillaſton, his extraordinary behaviour, his diſagreeable countenance, could not prevent the innocent Hannah from being much affected by his generous treatment of her. Gratitude was ſtrongly impreſſed on her heart: and ſhe was aſhamed of

of herself for having a good opinion of so worthless a being as young Pitman then appeared in her eyes. She saw the difference of the behaviour of the two men: and she applauded and respected the one, whilst she condemned and despised the other. She loved Hillaston, without knowing it. In his absence she had often thought of her deliverer, and lamented his lunacy with tears. When she saw him return to Berkshire again, which she feared he never would, her little heart was swelled with joy, and his attention to her gave her infinite pleasure: when she perceived that he was so much more sociable and free than he was before, she concluded that he had got rid of his madness, and would have the enjoyment of his right senses again; and in that light he appeared still more amiable in her eyes: for poor Hannah, unlike the generality of her sex, paid more regard to the jewel, which such
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an ill favoured casket contained, than to the casket itself.

This was a proof of her ignorance, for there are at least a thousand females to one of a contrary way of thinking: and a glittering outside, a specious appearance, shall be more valued and regarded than the most engaging and amiable qualities which may have the misfortune of wanting personal beauty to attach the first notice: yet it is most probable that Hannah would have ensured herself happiness by the prudence of her choice, whilst the others would be as industrious in procuring themselves misfortune. The great respect that the whole family had for Hil- laston, prevented their observing the particular attention which Hannah ever paid to him, and unknown to herself. How natural it is for us to endeavour to please those we love! it is also a satisfaction to ourselves to render them all the good offices in our power.

Hannah,

Hannah, whose native modesty would have urged her to receive death almost as soon as suffered a suspicion to have fallen on her virtue by her own misconduct, was still wading further into the stream, whose rapidity was carrying her away without her knowledge.

Rigby in the mean time, did not fail to pay his compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox, who received him very kindly, as did also Miss Bennet.

About a month before he left the country, he happened to go to see the latter, on a day that she had appointed to go over to stay a little while with her cousin; he therefore begged leave to accompany her, which she with pleasure complied with, thanking him at the same time for his company. As they passed through a little village which lay in their road, they found one of the cottages on fire; and it being a dry season, the straw, with which it was thatched, blazed most furiously: the inhabitants of the place, eager to save their own houses from taking
fire,

fire, and to quench it, were all in confusion. The horse that Miss Bennet rode was young and skittish. The flames and the noise of the people frightened him. In spite of all her efforts, though she was a good rider, he ran away with her. Rigby desired the servant not to follow his mistress too closely; and clapping spurs to his horse, cleared the hedge into the field that lay next the road, and struck across two or three more fields that lay between him and a common which he knew the road led to, and cut off a large angle of it. He succeeded in his design: and Miss Bennet still keeping her seat, though much terrified, he disengaged his feet from the stirrups, and shooting across her horse, seized him by the bridle, and threw himself off at the same instant. The sudden shock dismounted her, and falling into Rigby's arms, (who was on one knee on the earth) she let go her horse's bridle; and he ran off.

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By this time the servant came up, and with the greatest difficulty Miss Bennet was prevented from fainting. When she had a little recovered herself, she returned him many thanks for saving her life: for she declared she was so giddy from the swiftness with which she was carried, that she could not have kept her seat much longer. They sent the servant after his mistress's horse, for Rigby's was feeding very quietly by them: he entreated Miss Bennet to sit upon his knee, which she refused, but pointing to a bank, they retreated to it: however, when Rigby attempted to rise, he found it was a task he could not accomplish: as he had thrown himself from his horse, his right foot had got into a cart-rut, and his ankle was very much sprained: with great difficulty he arose, and supported the yet trembling Lydia to the bank, where she proposed to rest herself. The tender heart of Miss Bennet suffered more for his misfortune than from the apprehensions of her own danger, and she lamented it in more

moving terms. Rigby intreated her to make herself easy about it, and complained of its only being stiff.

The servant, with some trouble, caught the runaway horse, but Lydia would not venture to ride him again ; she took her servant's, and Rigby was obliged to be helped on his. Very luckily they were not above three miles from Mrs. Wilcox's.

As soon as they arrived there he was taken off his horse, and his boot was cut from his leg, which was much swelled and discoloured. A surgeon was immediately sent for, and, till he came, Mrs. Watson applied some proper things to allay the swelling. They would not suffer him to be moved home, but kept him there till his cure was compleated.

In some of the conversations he had with Mrs. Wilcox, he learned, that Sir Thomas Crawford had given up his pretensions to Miss Bennet, and she was disengaged again. The young Lady sat with him very frequently, declaring, as it was

upon

upon her account he received the hurt, that she should do all in her power to divert him during his confinement. He had, by this means, an opportunity of contemplating the sweetness of her temper, her amiable manners, and the tenderness of her disposition: and his heart had fallen a victim to her charms, had not the idea of the lovely Maria totally engrossed it;—not that Lydia was inferior to her in beauty, but it was of a different kind.

Mr. Bennet went over to his nephew's while Rigby was yet confined, and thanked him in the most affectionate manner for his kindness to his daughter; telling him, he was indebted to him for his child's life.

The time was now approaching when he hoped to meet his beloved Maria; and the remembrance of her cost him many a sigh. These did not pass unobserved by Miss Bennet, who could not help communicating her fears to her cousin. When Rigby was restored to the use of his leg,

he went home, after repeating his grateful sense of the favour they had done him in taking such care of him. In a short time after he went away to Cambridge.

This accident served but to encrease Miss Bennet's liking for Rigby: his gallantry and generosity appeared in the most amiable light in her eyes; she loved him, and she hid not her passion from her cousin—Those sighs that had escaped him, gave her great uneasiness, and though she had no reason to imagine that she possessed his heart, yet she feared that some other person did. But as he had never even mentioned any lady's name, on whom a suspicion of that kind might fall, they were supposed to arise from the tediousness of his cure. Lydia, nevertheless, felt all the pains of an hopeless passion, which her delicacy and virtue forbade her to reveal.

B O O K V I I I.

RIGBY, soon after his return to Cambridge, went over to Mrs. Hillaſton's to pay his compliments, and her ſon accompanied him. It was with infinite pleaſure the good lady ſaw him ſo much altered for the better. His reaſon and ſenſe ſeem'd to have reviſited him again; that obſtinate melancholy had left him, and all the family rejoiced at this happy alteration. Rigby was moſt particularly endeared to them, as it was imagined this was effected by his company and converſation; the two ladies therefore welcom'd him with great cordiality: and in the courſe of the day, Miſs Hillaſton informed him ſhe expected her young friend about the latter end of the next week. Mrs. Hillaſton preſs'd him to come and ſpend a month with them, for they had ſettled a pleaſing party for that time, as Miſs Leeſon had engaged to ſtay

a couple of months with them when she visited them next. They promised themselves much happiness, and every thing wore the most agreeable face. The love-sick Rigby long'd for the day that would bring Maria to his eyes.—But though he was anxious about her reception of him, yet he was not without hopes: and the pleasure he felt from the great alteration of his friend, helped to keep up his spirits; he was not so austere in his manner now as formerly; he seem'd more fond of society; he was more communicative than heretofore, and seldom or never mentioned the cause of his woe. These symptoms portended a perfect cure: and as Hillaston seldom left him, he had an opportunity of observing his behaviour more accurately, and had the greatest reason to believe the cure of his friend would soon be effected.

At the time he imagined that his Maria was at Mrs. Hillaston's, he went over, and
Hillaston

Hillaſton along with him: he was much chagrined when he found ſhe was not yet come. However, he did not remain uneaſy long, for in about two hours after he arrived there ſhe came, and, in his opinion, looked more lovely than ever. With trembling lips he ſaluted her, and his voice was ſcarce audible when he welcomed her into that country again. His heart palpitated high with joy, when he beheld her arrayed in all her charms: but it ſunk too, and with it his pleaſure, when he ſaw her introduce a Captain Coates, who had been the companion of her journey, to Mrs. Hillaſton's, and the family. The Captain apologiſed for his viſit by aſſigning the cauſe of it, which was to conduct Miſs Leeſon to her friends. Mrs. Hillaſton made him welcome, and aſſured him ſhe was always very glad to ſee any of Miſs Leeſon's acquaintance. After theſe introductory, yet neceſſary compliments were over, the company ſubſided into order, and every body ſeemed

F 4

pleaſed:

pleased : but it was only seeming with poor Rigby, who, at that moment, experienced the bitterest pangs of jealousy. Captain Coates was young, genteel, polite, and tolerably handsome. He possessed that *gaiete de cœur*, and happy assurance which distinguishes the gentlemen of the army in particular, who not only earn laurels from our foes, but also gather them, without much trouble, from our ladies. The less confident Rigby, saw with envy his sallies of pleasantry, and desire to amuse, attended with all the success he could wish; and every smile with which the sprightly Maria applauded any of these, was a dagger to his heart, pain'd already to an excess of torment. He disguised his feelings as much as possible, but could not be what he wished.

The Captain, who was every thing that was agreeable, engrossed the attention of the women so much, that Rigby could scarcely squeeze in a word. But if this
was

was displeasing, it was attended with one good circumstance : his silence and reserve was by that means rendered less noticed than they would have otherwise been. Rigby was not displeased when he saw the Captain depart in the evening, whose genius had towered so far above his. He had intreated permission to pay his compliments to the Hillaſton family; which had been permitted, with much politeneſs, before he went away. Rigby thought that did not propheſy any good to him : His diffidence and modeſty, the ſincerity of his paſſion, and the honeſt fear ever attendant on it, prevented his ſhining ſo much as the Captain did, whoſe behaviour he had compared with his own, and always to his own diſadvantage. When he went away, his good humour returned by degrees; and, with great ſatiſfaction, he did not perceive any alteration in his miſtreſs's behaviour to him. It was his buſineſs now, to endeavour to make himſelf as agreeable as he

could to Maria; and to this intent he summoned up all his powers, and succeeded. The ladies renewed their walks with him, and found him the entertaining companion they could wish. In the afternoon he asked Miss Leeson if she could play a particular song which he mentioned. She replied, she could. He begged permission to accompany her. She never heard him sing, but would willingly play it. His voice was powerful; it was manly, but sweet; and his judgment modulated it with harmony. Maria was very agreeably surprized at his performance. She made him sing again: He obeyed so pleasing an injunction with great readiness. He was more applauded for the repetition than before. While he sung, his eyes were directed to the object of his heart's tenderest wishes: They spoke a language very intelligible; and the expressions of his voice rendered them more easily understood. Maria was neither so blind, or so stupid, as to pass over this

this evidence of his continuing love : She noticed it, and her heart rejoiced at this mark of the power of her charms. She wished to ensure the conquest ; for Rigby was by no means disagreeable to her. She indulged him, by playing and singing many favourite songs herself. All was joy and rapture in the poor lover's breast, who could not, however, in the midst of his transports, forget the dreaded Captain, whom he much feared had gained Maria's good opinion. Many were the doubts and surmises he entertained : but still he possessed the same freedom as ever with Miss Leeson ; and that was all he could at present hope for. One thing he was resolved on ; when the Captain returned, as it was to be supposed he would in a few days, that he would not surrender his post so quietly as he had done before, or give his rival any opportunity of entertaining his mistress but in his presence.

The next day the captain's arrival obliged him to put the resolutions he had formed in practice. Rigby, who had conceived some hopes from the gracious treatment he had met with from Maria, was no longer the timid, bashful, distant man he had been when they were together before. He attached himself as closely, and was as attentive to Maria, as the Captain himself was. He was full of spirits; and, in the course of the conversation, turned the laugh with great success against the Captain. Rigby, who found, upon the trial, that he was not inferior to his rival in the arts of pleasing, forbore to triumph over him, when he had shewn him that he was no despicable enemy. The Captain had sense enough to perceive his moderation; but he did not thank him much for it, nor did he like his particularity to Miss Lesson: but he could not prevent it. He determined not to afford him matter of triumph,

triumph, and became more reserved and silent. Rigby enjoyed his humiliation, and was more sprightly in consequence of it.

Maria, who saw this contest between her admirers, was not well pleased at it, as she did not know how far it might be carried: and to shew one a greater preference than the other, would only be blowing up the flame. She had a prepossession in favour of Rigby, and approved his passion in secret; but till she had known him a little longer, would not venture to disclose her opinion of him. If any altercation should happen between these gentlemen, she foresaw that an explanation must necessarily ensue, and that she wished to avoid, at least for some time: she therefore carried herself so evenly, that neither could boast of her being more inclined to him than the other; not that she was a coquet, either in disposition or behaviour; but she feared that they might miscon-

misconstrue her conduct in their own favour, and, by that means, presuming upon her partiality, proceed to extremities. These considerations did not contribute to her peace.

The Captain, after spending a disagreeable day, though with his mistress, retired, and left his enemy in possession of the field, much against his inclination.

The reserve that Maria had assumed wore off gradually; and Rigby construed her returning gaiety to his advantage, and drew the most favourable consequences, in his own imagination, from it. However he would not venture to address her, particularly, again, till he should really know the state of her heart; and, in the meantime, contented himself with rendering her any little service, which chance or design might afford him an opportunity of doing. This attentive behaviour did not pass unnoticed by the family; and Miss Hillaston joked her friend, in private, on the

the conquest she had made; Maria's prudence prevented her even letting her friend into the secrets of her heart, lest her regard for Rigby might induce her to reveal it to her brother, and by that means it should come to his ears, who ought not to hear it at present, or, whom, if her delicacy might be gratified, should only hear it. The pleasure she expressed in Rigby's company made him happy; and she also received no small degree of satisfaction.

Hillafton had spent two nights with them, and was, besides, to and fro three or four times in the ten days that they had been there, and came early on that morning on which Captain Coates paid his third visit. It was not very agreeable to him, as we have observed before, to leave Rigby with Maria: but how could he help himself? Though asked to stay at Mrs. Hillafton's, he could not, with any degree of politeness, accept the invitation upon his slight acquaint-

acquaintance. To remove all his difficulties and uneasinesses, he must make Rigby resign his pretensions,—but how to do that he knew not, unless chance should throw the occasion in his way. In this disposition he alighted at Mrs. Hillaston's. Rigby view'd him in as disagreeable a light; and, in him, saw the only obstruction to his happiness. With this mutual animosity it was no very difficult matter to find an opportunity of expressing it. The day was fine, and a walk in the garden was proposed; they strolled about.—In the course of an entertaining conversation, the Captain let fall some expression which the sprightly Maria could not avoid laughing at. Rigby heighten'd the ridicule by a sarcastic explanation. The Captain, tho' he could endure the Lady's raillery, would, by no means, stand as the butt of Rigby's wit:—he replied very tartly and contemptuously, and his rival was not behind-hand in returning it. Maria interposed, by
turning

turning the conversation; and no further notice appeared to be taken of it. As they were going out of the garden, towards the house, the ladies went first; and, as soon as they were in doors, the Captain tap'd Rigby on the shoulder — “A word with you, if you please, Sir,”

“By all means—twenty Sir.”

“You have made use of too many already, Sir—more than you'll chuse to account for.”

“You are mistaken, Sir; — I'll render you any account you can demand, when and where you please.”

“'Tis well—I shall be at the town of H——, about five miles from hence, at six o'clock in the morning of the day but one from this.”

“I'll not fail to meet you.—Your weapons and terms?”

“Pistols, and with a friend.”

“I shall be sure to attend you, and the conqueror takes Miss Leeson.”

“Agreed.”

They

They hastened in as fast as they could, lest the ladies should observe their absence: and the two gentlemen disguised the matter so well, and behaved so agreeably, that Maria dismiss'd every apprehension that she had conceived.

When the Captain went home, Rigby acquainted Hillaiston with what had passed, at the same time entreating him to be his friend on this occasion, which he promised. "Indeed," said he, "I expected this from your behaviour—but you may depend on me.—You shall also have my pistols."

Rigby gave not the least indication of what had happened; on the contrary, he made a party to go to view a prospect, particularly beautiful, on that day, if the weather should be fine. The women, who had no suspicion of what was going forward, consented.

In the morning Rigby and his friend repaired to the appointed place, where they met

met the captain and a brother officer. Hillaston addressed the parties, and declared his sorrow at their meeting on such an occasion and begged them to consider whether the matter was not to be conciliated.

“It is impossible,” replied Rigby briskly; “Captain Coates is an admirer of the charming Miss Leeson’s. I adore her; I cannot, I will not resign the possession of her, while I have life, to any man. If the Captain quits his pretensions to her, I am willing to drop this quarrel; if not, our terms are, that the victor shall take her.”

“Be it so then,” answered Coates, “and only on that condition. To give her up tamely would argue a baseness that my blood’s a stranger to.”

“And I,” replied Rigby, “will not suffer any other man to interrupt my happiness.”

The seconds found that nothing could be done. They charged the pistols, marked out the ground, and retired.

The

The gallantry and courage of the combatants were truly admirable, had they been concerned in any other cause, or shewn it in any other manner, than for their mutual destruction. Though they turned to fire, so determined and so cool were they, that both were wounded. The ball grazed Rigby's shoulder, and cut part of his neck; and the Captain's arm was broke. As soon as he received the wound the pistol fell from his hand, and he staggered with the shock. As the distance was eight yards, Rigby was first with him, and supported him in his arms. When the seconds came up, "Sir," said the Captain, "you have conquered: I resign Miss Leeson to you, well pleased she is fallen into the hands of so brave a man."

"Sir, replied Rigby, "I am truly sorry that this is the consequence of our passion: but give me leave to help you to the town, to get some assistance."

They

They were not far distant, and they soon got a surgeon, who gave the Captain great hopes that there would be no bad consequences attending it. After he was dressed, Rigby begged a cast of his office; for, he said, he found himself grow faint with loss of blood: and, stripping his coat and waistcoat, his shirt was all over blood: for, though his wound was but slight, yet it bled very plentifully. However, it was soon dressed, and he felt very little pain from it.

During these operations, Captain Coates observed a ring upon Rigby's finger, which struck him. He begged to look at it.—“Pray, Sir,” said he, “if I may with propriety be resolved, how did you come by this?”

“A lady gave it to me, Sir.”

“I believe I am more interested in the question than you imagine. Where does the lady live?”

“In Berkshire, Sir.”

“Her

"Her name is now Wilcox."

"It is."

"Then, Sir, she is my sister; and I have
"lifted up my hand against the man in the
"world I should most respect and honour."

Rigby stood amazed.

"In this ring, Sir," continued the Captain, returning it to him, "her hair is
"mixed with mine; and she told me, when
"I saw her last, to whom she gave it, and
"for what service. My passion put your
"name, and even the recollection of it,
"out of my head: let me, with my remaining arm, press you to my heart, that
"beats with gratitude and thanks to you."

Rigby returned the embrace with great cordiality: and the surgeon, who, not being able to conceive the reason why two men, who had met with a determined resolution to blow one another's brains out, should, on a sudden, become so fond, stood dumb with surprize.

“ I had lamented already, Sir,” said Rigby, “ the rashness and fury that urged me to this. But when I consider you as the brother of my very good friend Mrs. Wilcox, I am truly grieved and ashamed. I entreat your forgiveness, Sir, for this injury.”

“ It was my fault,” said Coates; “ and let it be forgotten. Henceforward, let our hearts be united.”

Rigby accepted his proffered friendship with joy; and having shaken hands together, they departed.

It was great matter of surprise to Rigby that, from the time the Captain was brought to the inn where he was dressed, he had seen nothing of Hillaaston—he could not conjecture what was become of him:—but as he had been tolerably well accustomed to his flighty ways, thought nothing extraordinary in his departure. He therefore bent his course towards Mrs. Hillaaston’s again. It will be necessary, in
the

the mean time, to explain the cause of Hillaston's unfriendly proceeding, as it appeared to be. It just at that instant came into his head, that this was the most favourable time for resolving all his friend's doubts concerning Maria's disposition towards him—the scheme struck him, and he set out homewards to put it in execution. When he arrived there he found the family waiting breakfast for them; and the two girls, in particular, very anxious to know the cause of their sudden elopement in the morning. When he went into the parlour his sister first interrogated him.

“Lord, brother, where have you been?”

“Don't ask me,” said he, with a face strongly expressive of horror.

“What's become of Mr. Rigby?”

“Mr. Rigby!”

“Good heaven,” said Maria, “how came you by that blood on your coat and

"and shirt?" which he got in helping the Captain.

"Aye," said he, making a small pause, and looking at it very attentively—"It is his blood, indeed, poor fellow!"

"Good God! his blood!" and she fell back helpless in the chair.

Hillafton, his sister, and mother, ran to her assistance, and she was with difficulty recovered again. When she came to herself, and looked at Hillafton, a shower of tears fell from her surcharged eyes.

"For God's sake, child," said his mother, "let us know what is the matter."

"It might have been prevented, Madam," said he, "if Miss Leeson had made a determination between the gentlemen."

"Oh, that I had!" said she, "and saved a life that is so dear to me—or that doing it now wou'd answer."

“Ladies are fond of retaining their admirers about them; their delicacy or coquetry prevents them from acting according to the dictates of their hearts, and the most dismal consequences attend this unjust proceeding.”

“If I could recall what’s past, neither should hinder me from avowing my regard for him—But that is all over, and I am wretched.”

“No, Maria, he is not dead yet,—but he is wounded.”

“And where is he?”

“Coming home, I suppose, by this time.”

When she heard that, her shame and confusion almost reduced her to her former state. — “Oh, Mr. Hillaston,” said she, “how could you be so ungenerous as to take advantage of my fears to extort this secret from me.—It is unkind in you—and base and detestable in him to consent to this scheme, unmanly as it is, to terrify me so much. All the
“esteem

“esteem I had for him will be converted
“into hatred and contempt.”

“You wrong him,” replied he; “for
“I will assure you, in the most solemn
“manner, he is innocent of this design,
“nor does he know, at this moment, where
“I am. If there is any body merits blame,
“in this matter, it is me.—But my scheme
“was to know how your heart beat to-
“wards him: and I can assure you, Maria,
“he is truly worthy of your affection.
“Had you seen him venture his life to
“assert his right to you, perhaps you might
“have thought more favourably of him.”

“I should have expired at the sight,”
said she—“How was it, brother?”

He related the whole affair to the atten-
tive and terrified females. Maria sat trem-
bling all the while: She was hardly re-
composed, when a servant came in to tell
Mr. Hillaſton that Mr. Rigby wanted
him. This threw her into great agitations;
and they were increased, when ſhe ſaw Hil-

laston leading him with his pallid face into the parlour, where they were then sitting.

"Here he is," said he, "though not unhurt."

Rigby, who was persuaded that the matter was a profound secret, blushed up to the eyes, and looked very reproachfully at his friend.

"You need not accuse me with your eyes, Rigby; for I have told the whole story: and, if you will believe me, it is the best duel you ever fought in your life."

"Lord," said Mrs. Hillaiston, "I am a very good surgeon; and you must permit me to look at your wound. I will give you a cordial too, to keep up your spirits. I have the best family plaster in the world; but, unfortunately, there is none of it spread now. Come along with me, Anna, and help me. Do sit down, and sit quiet, till we return."

"Aye,

“Aye, aye, go and help your mother,” said Hillaſton to his ſiſter. And as they went out of the room, added, “Now comfort Maria, Rigby; and I will take care that nobody interrupts you.”

He went away, and left them together.

Maria ſat, during this converſation, with her handkerchief to her face. When ſhe heard Hillaſton’s words, her agitations increaſed, and her trepidation became viſible even to Rigby, who was almoſt in as bad a ſtate as ſhe was.

“I much fear, Miſs Leeſon, that my friend’s imprudence, in betraying this unhappy affair, has made you uneaſy; believe me, when I aſſure you, that I would rather die than offend you.”

“Indeed, Mr. Rigby, I am very ſorry for the——”

“By heaven, I would rather that every drop of my blood had been ſpilt, than create you trouble; and in the ſame cauſe too I would willingly——”

“ Oh,” said she, interrupting him, “ if
 “ you knew how wretched you have made
 “ me !”

“ Would to God then I had been killed !
 “ but my grief will soon destroy me.”

“ Oh, do not talk so,” said the tender
 Maria, the tears yet streaming from her
 eyes ; “ why do you wish to distress me ?
 “ My affliction might shew you, that your
 “ life is not indifferent to me.”

“ Unmerited goodness !—On my knees
 “ let me thank you for it. Yet add more to
 “ it, and say you wish me to preserve it.”

“ I do, I do : but pray take something ;
 “ you look very ill.”

“ Your kindness will more completely
 “ effect my cure, than all the medicines on
 “ earth.”

“ Let me intreat you, rise,” said she,
 “ and take some relief, if you regard me.”

“ I will shew it by my obedience to your
 “ desire, lovely Maria.”

He

He printed a lively kiss on her hand, and rose.

During this conversation, Hillaston opposed all the attempts of his mother and sister to enter, and apply the remedies they had prepared. He maintained, that Rigby would receive more benefit from Maria's acknowledgment of her regard, than their plasters. All his mother's remonstrances were ineffectual, till Rigby came to the door, and opened it.

After making him swallow a cordial, which revived his spirits, she insisted on seeing his neck. And all his opposition, which arose from politeness, was in vain. She told him, in her leisure hours she had made that part of surgery, which relates to the curing of green wounds, her study. He was obliged to submit; and the two young ladies retired during the operation. Hillaston and his mother only remained: and the good Lady, while she was dressing him, which it must be confessed she did

very judiciously, read her patient a lecture on his conduct, and shewed him the sin and folly of such partial engagements. Good and prudent as this advice was, and reasonable as her reprehensions were, Rigby's mind was too much employed in thinking of the delightful confession his Maria had made him, to pay much attention to this grave rebuke; though he had the greatest opinion of Mrs. Hillaston's good sense. As soon as opportunity offered, he acquainted Hillaston with his happiness. His friend heard the account he gave him with a great deal of pleasure.

“Rigby, my dear Rigby,” said he with a sigh, “may you be blessed to the extent
 “of your wishes: as for me, I can never
 “know peace. I thought I should be of
 “service to you, by that abrupt manner
 “of introducing your duel; and I was not
 “deceived. It has procured an explanation
 “of her sentiments. You will be
 “happy in her affections. I must go from
 “hence,”

"hence," added he: "In three days I shall return to you again."

Rigby beheld with great concern the alteration in his manner of speaking to him on this subject. He feared he was going to relapse. He saw the same stern melancholy again assume the place on his brow, and the same disregard of himself return.

In his absence the happy Rigby failed not to improve the good opinion Maria had of him; and as he could, without fear, impart to her the sentiments of his heart, he acquainted her with the sincerity and violence of his passion. As his designs were of the most honourable nature, he talked to her, in those private conversations they held, of the prospect of their future union. He informed her of his circumstances and views in life.

"With me, charming Maria, you will not be possessed of grandeur or pomp; but in their room we will substitute happiness and content: and, if it will not

“ disgust you to become a country parson’s
 “ wife, you may enjoy all the blifs that re-
 “ tirement, and my assiduous endeavours
 “ to please, can procure you.”

“ Indeed, Mr. Rigby, if I could not
 “ promise myself happiness in spending my
 “ life with you, I had not gone so far as I
 “ have done. But how this scheme of ours
 “ may be completed, I know not. I have
 “ no fortune independent of my father ;
 “ and I doubt very much whether we
 “ should meet his approbation : without it
 “ I could not think of taking such a step.
 “ Though he is my father, yet I cannot
 “ be blind to his character, nor a stranger
 “ to his disposition. He is severe and in-
 “ flexible in his notions of honour, and
 “ upon all occasions very jealous of his own.
 “ As he considers himself the head of the
 “ family, he demands the most implicit
 “ obedience from his wife and children :
 “ But he is a good and a tender father, and
 “ loves us all with the most paternal affec-
 “ tion.

“tion. How then can I venture to dis-
 “oblige him? or, if done without his
 “knowledge, how should I find means to
 “be reconciled to him afterwards? It
 “would be totally impossible. Upon such
 “an occasion he would be deaf to all per-
 “suasions and arguments, and be hurried
 “away by his passions; which, I assure
 “you, are very violent.”

“And what do you think the most likely
 “method to obtain his approbation, which
 “I would not have you neglect; though,
 “perhaps, he may never consent to our
 “union?”

“Time must bring it about, and we
 “must wait with patience till then: some
 “lucky accident may happen that will be-
 “friend us.”

Thus the amiable lovers anticipated time
 in their eager hopes, and satisfied of mutual
 regard, spent their hours in the bosom of
 felicity.

On the third day, according to his promise, Hillaston arrived: but he was no longer the easy sociable companion he had been; his unhappy flame burned more fiercely, and tended more immediately to his destruction. Rigby requested to know if he had any fresh cause of uneasiness, and entreated him to tell him the reason of the great alteration that appeared in him. He answered not, but sighed and shook his head.

Rigby, to divert his attention, told him how matters stood between him and Maria: but that only served to encrease his grief. "Unhappy wretch that I am," said he, "when even the pleasures of my friends
"but serve to augment my pain: I have
"no business any longer in this world, where
"I cannot enjoy any thing in it."

Rigby strove to compose his mind, and to reason with him, but all in vain: he was insensible to every thing but his own torment. His stay was very short. At his departure

departure he shook hands with Rigby very affectionately, and told him it would be a long time before he should see him again. He waited not for a reply, but strode away. Rigby was very uneasy at his demeanour, for he now seemed worse than ever; but he concealed those suspicions from Mrs. Hil-
 laston, who still conceived hopes that her son would be restored to his senses and former composure by keeping Rigby company. Maria perceived the gloom which this conversation had cast on her lover's spirits, and he was obliged to assign as a reason, to satisfy her tender enquiries, that he feared his friend would break out again into his former madness, but requested her to be secret. Maria spared no pains to allure him from those melancholy reflections: she succeeded, and all was happiness and pleasure. The next day an express came to him forwarded by one of his friends at Cambridge—It was from Mr. Wilkins—Mrs. Rigby was dying, and wanted to see her
 son—

son—He determined to set off directly to take a mother's last blessing whom he so truly honoured and loved: however he had a private interview with his Maria, who shed a tear at her lover's distress—Time pressed him, and would not permit the utterance of those tender things which their hearts were fraught with. He asked leave to write to her, which she granted, and kindly promised to answer his letters, which were to be sent to her under cover to Miss Hillaston, who would convey them to her. Their tears flowed mutually as they separated, and he hurried away. He used all possible expedition in hopes of seeing his mother before she died. When he alighted at Mr. Wilkins's door, the worthy man ran out to him and told him his mother was yet alive, but that it was very doubtful how long she would continue so. He led the afflicted young man up to the chamber where the poor woman lay in the agonies of death. [She seemed to have retained her life to see him before

before she closed her eyes for ever. The women about her informed her of her son's arrival, and she turned her head towards him stretching out her hand. Rigby threw himself upon his knees, and kissing her almost chilled lips, bathed her face with his tears.

"It is a great satisfaction to me, my dear boy, to see you once more before I die—I must now render you justice; let me be alone with my son."

The attendants left the room, and Rigby only remained with her.

"I have not many moments to live," said she, her voice so low and broken that she could scarcely be heard or understood, "and must inform you of one great secret that nearly concerns you. But I should ask your forgiveness for the imposition.—My God forgive me!—My speech fails me—I am not your mother, though you took me for such—Farmer Wilkins will tell."

Here

Here she was interrupted by the hand of death; and though she still endeavoured to speak, nothing could be understood.

Rigby, who was struck dumb with astonishment and grief, had scarcely power to call for help. But they could give no assistance. She retained his hand in hers, till she breathed her last, which soon happened. Rigby left the room, overcome with affliction. But the extraordinary information he had learned, still engaged his attention more than any thing else. Mr. Wilkins, from whom he was to receive the satisfaction he expected, and his whole family, among whom Mrs. Rigby was very much loved, were in great grief on account of this melancholy event. As soon as it had subsided a little, he sought him out.—“Mr. Wilkins,” said he, “I
“have been bred up in your family, and
“not knowing the happiness of having a
“father, have always esteemed you in that
“light.

"light. Your behaviour has not left me
 "the least room to doubt your friendship
 "and regard for me. I hope that you
 "will not differ from your former conduct
 "now. That worthy woman, who now
 "lies dead, informed me, with her parting
 "breath, that she was not my mother.
 "She added, that you would tell me this
 "secret, which, you must suppose, I am
 "very anxious to know the truth of. For
 "God's sake then ease my heart, and let
 "me know how I came to pass for her
 "son."

"Oh my God!" said he, "clapping his
 hands together—"Poor woman, why was
 "this unhappy affair now revealed, only
 "to create this young man uneasiness!"

"You can remove it all, my friend, by
 "clearing up this mystery to me. Be
 "assured that the future happiness or mi-
 "sery of my life depends upon it: then
 "inform me, I beseech you, and ease my
 "labouring heart."

"Ah,

“ Ah, Mr. Rigby, that’s an impossibility. I am bound in the most solemn manner.”

“ There are no ties, Mr. Wilkins,” replied the youth hastily, “ that should prevent your informing me who the authors of my being are.—Your concealment may be attended with more dangerous and dreadful consequences to us all, than the violation of your engagement, however sacred, can be to you.”

“ I do not think that : nor can I, or will I, open my mouth to you about it, till I have permission.”

“ How long will it be till that is obtained ?”

“ It may be some time.”

“ Heaven and earth !” cried he, in an agony of grief—“ my soul has been unacquainted with affliction until this moment ; and now the torrent overwhelms me. It is not to be borne. Why am I the only man in the world reserved for
“ such

“such piercing woe! Am I the issue of
 “some lawless amour? Will the shame
 “of my parents arise in beholding me?
 “But where are they? Who are they?”
 added he, throwing himself on his knees
 to Wilkins—“Thus humbly I implore
 “you to relieve my impatience, and in-
 “form me of this dreadful mystery.”

The good old farmer was extremely af-
 fected at this address. He pitied, and
 felt for this young man's grief. The tears
 paced each other down his cheeks, while
 he sat silent before him.

“I see,” continued Rigby, “that my
 “situation afflicts you—Be generous and
 “kind enough to inform me of my origin.”

“Do not press me—I must repeat to
 “you, though sorry that I am obliged to
 “do it, that it is not possible.”

“Cruel and barbarous wretch!” said he,
 starting up, “to refuse me this small satis-
 “faction.”

“Be

“Be a little patient, Mr. Rigby; I will
 “use my utmost endeavours to satisfy
 “you, and as soon as may be. Be a little
 “quiet, till I can save my own conscience
 “harmless, and satisfy you.”

“Peace and quiet are, and will be,
 “strangers to me, till this affair is cleared
 “up.”

Rigby left Wilkins's presence, who had treated him very ill, as he thought, in not complying with his request. All was torment in his breast, and confusion in his brain, which was pained almost to madness. Time made his transports subside a little, and Wilkins took an opportunity of telling him that this matter was known to nobody in the world except himself and wife; and that he might depend upon it he would take the earliest opportunity of giving him every satisfaction in his power. This was all that he could obtain; and with this he must, *per force*, be contented.

Great

Great though his grief was on this extraordinary situation of his affairs, yet he received some consolation in writing to his Maria. She was punctual in returning an answer to his letter, in which she informed him that she should return home the next day, having been sent for, but should be glad to hear from him, as soon as convenient, when he intended to go into that country, and she would contrive to meet him at Mrs. Hillafton's.

This kind and unexpected token of the charming girl's regard, gave him great pleasure; and he determined to return to Cambridge as soon as he could, as he was to take his degree in a short time.* He failed not to impart this resolution to her, and spoke with rapture at the thoughts of meeting her again. Before he left Berkshire he went to pay Mrs. Wilcox a visit. She received him with pleasure; and seeing her in mourning, told her, he hoped
that

that she had not such a melancholy cause as he had for that dress.

“ Indeed, Sir, we have lost a very good friend in Mr. Bennet.”

“ Mr. Bennet! — Good God! his appearance promised long life.”

“ It did so; but an accident shortened his days. He hurt something in his inside, by a fall from his horse, which was beyond the art of the physicians to cure. He has acted very generously by us; and we have reason to honour his memory.”

“ He was a very worthy man, indeed: but how does his amiable daughter bear her loss?”

“ Very badly. We thought that she would never have recovered the shock; nor can his estate, which he has made her sole heiress of, at all compensate, in her opinion, the want of so good and tender a parent.”

“ I

“ I pity her condition sincerely ; and
“ know, from the simlarity of my situa-
“ tion, what she must feel.”

“ She is now with me, but in a very
“ weak and low state ; and I think you are
“ the fittest person to console her. The
“ loss of our parents is very shocking.”

“ I know it, Madam, by sad experience ;
“ for I have lost a mother.”

“ I have heard so.”

A pause ensued ; and Mrs. Wilcox wanted to inform Rigby of the state of her cousin's heart. The regard she had for him, and the little hopes she saw of his returning it, had preyed upon her spirits, before her father had met that accident which increased her grief. Mrs. Wilcox really loved and esteemed Rigby, as well for the good qualities she saw him possess, as for the services he had rendered her, which had occasioned her present happiness. She therefore thought it would be no breach of trust in her, to acquaint him with the state of

Miss

Miss Bennet's heart, if by that means she could promote her felicity. During the pause in the conversation, she was contriving how she should bring it about.

"My cousin," said she, "will be a very good match now for any body."

"I am sure she will render any man happy who is blessed with her hand: for she possesses all those virtues which can render the state of matrimony really happy."

"I think so myself: and I know a young gentleman on whom she would willingly bestow her hand and fortune: If I do not mistake, she has yielded him her heart long ago."

"He is surely a favourite of fortune. But is he acquainted with his felicity?"

"No; he knew nothing of it till this moment."

Rigby blushed, and looked very confused; but remained silent, with his eyes cast down to the floor.

"It

“It is very true,” continued Mrs. Wilcox, “what I have told you : and, had I
 “not known you to be a man of honour,
 “it should have remained an impenetrable
 “secret till the end of time. Besides, I have
 “experienced your friendship for me, and
 “have been truly benefited by it. The least
 “return I can make is, to point out to you
 “the road of happiness, if you can follow
 “it, with Lydia. The last service you did
 “her has penetrated deeply into her heart,
 “which feels a tenderer passion than grati-
 “tude for you. Make a good use of this
 “information, and let her not have the
 “most distant suspicion of my having told
 “you the secret of her heart ; which, ra-
 “ther than have thus revealed to you, I
 “am sure she would have preferred almost
 “to die.—A fine girl with two thousand
 “pounds a year is not to be met with
 “every day.”

Rigby was at a loss how to answer this speech : at last he found words.

“Madam, your conduct deserves my
 “heartiest, my sincerest thanks; and they
 “are all I have to return for your good-
 “ness. This circumstance, which you
 “have now acquainted me with, shall ne-
 “ver escape my lips. At any time I should
 “deem myself unworthy of the honour of
 “possessing Miss Bennet’s hand: but now
 “it is impossible. To explain this, it is
 “necessary that I should inform you, my
 “heart and vows are already engaged to
 “another, who returns them. I am ex-
 “ceedingly unhappy for your cousin, and
 “truly respect her. But we cannot com-
 “mand our inclinations.”

“We cannot, indeed.—Hapless Lydia!
 “your case is truly pitiable.”

Mrs. Wilcox judged it better that Rigby
 should not see Miss Bennet, who was then
 in a bad state of health: but, bidding
 him be secret, wished him a good journey,
 as he informed her he was going to leave
 the

the country in a day or two : and he departed.

In his way to Cambridge he could not help applauding himself, for the sacrifice he had made to Maria.

“ Poverty,” said he, “ with that dear girl, would be preferable to affluence in another.—Miss Bennet is truly amiable ; I am sensible of her perfections : but shall I sell myself, or be base enough to give my hand, where my heart cannot accompany it ! No ; to thee, charming Maria, I dedicate my life, and in thy service will I spend it.”

With this reflection did he beguile the way, every step of which led him nearer to the spot where he should see Maria.

The promise which Wilkins had made him, to unravel that mysterious conduct, which they had preserved, had in part quieted him ; though he was far from being easy about it.

He arrived at Cambridge, and wrote to Miss Leeson, inclosing the letter to Miss Hillaſton, to acquaint her that he was arrived, and would go to Mrs. Hillaſton's, when ſhe appointed the time.—The day after this was diſpatched, a large packet was delivered into his hands.—He broke it open.—In it was a letter directed to him, and a parcel alſo addreſſed to him, ſealed with three ſeals.—He could not tell what to make of it : but opening the letter, it ſoon explained the whole affair. He read thus :

“ It is all over, Rigby; my dear friend,
“ the ſcenes of my paſt life vaniſh before
“ my ſight, and I only look forward to
“ the peaceful haven, whither I go to enjoy
“ a quiet and reſt, that the peculiarity of
“ my unhappy fate denied me here. Blame
“ me not, my friend, nor treat my memory
“ with reproach. Is it an act of cowardice
“ to eſcape from ills which cannot be ſup-
“ ported?

"ported? I have endeavoured to take
 "thy advice—I struggled with the guilty, the
 "unnatural passion, but all my efforts were
 "vain—like a bow long bent, it flew back
 "with redoubled violence, and I must sink
 "under it. The contest can be no longer
 "maintained, and I must yield to superior
 "force. A life of torment, to end in
 "suicide, cannot be shocking. But this
 "is a secret to all the world: nor do thou
 "reveal it. The deadly potion is by my
 "side. I look on it with pleasure, as the
 "means of restoring me to peace. The
 "reflection that repose yet awaits me, af-
 "fords me more satisfaction than I have
 "known this long time. I will employ
 "this calm moment then in acquainting
 "you with my affairs.

"With this you receive my will, of
 "which I have constituted you executor,
 "along with my mother, requesting you to
 "accept of three thousand pounds for the
 "trouble I have given you. The rest of

“ my fortune I leave to my sister. My
 “ mother has an exact copy of it, and I
 “ am convinced the validity of it will never
 “ be disputed. I make it my last request
 “ to you to visit my unhappy mother, and
 “ comfort her : but let my fate be an en-
 “ tire secret to her, nor embitter the re-
 “ mainder of her days by the knowledge
 “ of my crimes.

“ This was my last, my only business
 “ on earth. I have swallowed the draught
 “ that is to confer eternal quiet on me.
 “ The subtil potion already has mixed
 “ with my blood ; it chills and curdles in
 “ my frigid veins. It is beyond human
 “ art to afford me a remedy now—I am al-
 “ ready numbered with the dead. If I
 “ have committed an error, do thou, Fa-
 “ ther of mercy, forgive and pardon me.
 “ Let the words of peace cheer my strug-
 “ gling soul in its last agonies ; and let the
 “ promises of bliss gild the horrors of dis-
 “ solution with hope. I wish I could once
 “ more

" more embrace you, my friend: but that
 " wish is vain; for the distance between us
 " is great at this time, and, before you re-
 " ceive this, the hand that writes it will
 " be cold and lifeless.

" Rigby, the man who is your friend,
 " and takes this last opportunity of assuring
 " you of his regard, descends to the grave
 " in early life: but his misfortunes make
 " him think what is past as long as an
 " age. I go to sleep with my fathers, and
 " leave a world that has been productive
 " of nothing but misery to me. I die,
 " Rigby, the victim of an incestuous and
 " unnatural passion, that renders me unfit
 " to live.—Life was wretched, and even
 " death appears full of horror and de-
 " spair. But the resolution is taken, and I
 " must depart. The king of terrors calls
 " me, and I obey his summons. I delay
 " but to assure you, with my last breath,
 " that I am still

" Your sincere and wretched friend,

" RICHARD HILLASTON."

Rigby's blood ran cold as he read the horrid epistle; it fell from his hands when he finished it. He threw himself into a chair, frozen with horror. For a long time he remained almost insensible. At last he found his speech, and attained his reason.—“Wretched indeed!” exclaimed he—“What madness! What desperation! “Unhappy man! What could have “tempted thee to sin thus? And why “wouldest thou remove so far from me, “that I cannot have the satisfaction of “performing the last duties to thy remains! “Thou art no more. My generous, my “worthy friend, thou art no more. But “thy memory shall be ever dear to me. “I will cherish it to my latest hour.”

The tear of distress started from his eye, as he thus lamented his friend. The sigh of affliction rent his bosom; he remained overwhelmed with grief. He retired early to bed, for he wanted rest, yet none could he find. When sleep closed his eyes,

eyes, the most horrible dreams were presented to his disturbed fancy, and the lifeless, the self-murdered Hillaſton, was always the ſubject of them. And ſo much more ſhocking were theſe terrible images rendered by his confuſed imagination, that he was glad to be awake, to enjoy a ſober reality of facts, grievous and mournful though ſuch reflections were. For two days he ſtirred not out—he remained in a ſtate of dejection and melancholy, that was truly pitiable. But what encreaſed his uneaſineſs and affliction was, how he ſhould acquaint a fond ſiſter and a tender mother of his dreadful fate. He determined, at all events, to obey his friend's injunctions, and conceal the truth of the affair from them. Accordingly, in a few days he wrote a letter to Mrs. Hillaſton, in which he broke the matter to her in the moſt tender and conſolatory manner; and told her, that her ſon died of a fever, which was ſo violent in its courſe, that he expired in

a few days—and promised to pay her a visit very soon; informing her of his being left joint-executor with her.

Melancholy were his thoughts and heart-rending his reflections on the state of his affairs at that time. It seemed as if all the misfortunes he was doomed to suffer were collected together, and discharged at once on him, to make the stroke more dreadful. The uncertainty of his birth, and his ignorance of his family, went near to his heart: the death of his friend, whom he sincerely loved, in such a violent manner, affected him very strongly. Miss Bennet returned to his imagination: he pitied her; and, what to a thousand young men would have afforded pleasure, and excited vanity, was the cause of great uneasiness to him. Maria, the cure for all his woes, then appeared; and, in the prospect of happiness with her, all other considerations were drowned. In a few days he found a letter from Miss Leeson, informing him that she should

should be at Mrs. Hillaſton's on a particular day, which ſhe named. He was determined to meet her; but, that his being there might appear more like chance than deſign, he ſent word to Mrs. Hillaſton, that he would do himſelf the honour of paying her a viſit, as well to offer her his compliments of condolance, as to have the will read. Accordingly he went, and he dreaded meeting the ladies. It was truly melancholy; but he mingled his tears with theirs, and was ſtill more endeared to them. He offered to reſign the truſt his friend repoſed in him, and the legacy; but Mrs. Hillaſton inſiſted on his retaining the latter, and requeſted the favour of him to act as their friend, and open the will. He promiſed to obey them. The old lady told him, with tears, that he muſt now be a ſon to her, and a brother to her daughter.

They ſpent a melancholy afternoon together; but Rigby found the ladies more compoſed and reſigned than he imagined.

He was very much pleased at it; and the affection they both expressed for him, made him interested in their happiness. The next day he had the great satisfaction to see his dear Maria arrive. The family wanted a friend to console them; and who so proper as the sensible, the compassionate Maria. Though a great part of her time was taken up in rendering those little friendly services to the Hillastons, yet did the lovers find an opportunity to speak in private, and reveal the tender sentiments of their virtuous hearts. In her presence Rigby found the agitations of his soul subside, and peace, with halcyon wing, returned once more.

Three days had passed already, and only marked with encreasing happiness to Rigby, who enjoyed, in his Maria's vows of constancy, all his heart wished for. On the fourth, as they were sitting together alone, talking of that union that was to render them both blessed, and the ardent lover had

had claimed a willing kiss from the lips of his Maria, they heard a noise.—She turned pale.—“What ails you, my love?” said the anxious Rigby.

“I know that voice : it is my mother’s.
“Here she is.”

As she spoke Mrs. Leeson burst into the room, with a wildness of aspect that terrified her daughter almost to death. They both rose at her approach. “Sir,” said she, addressing herself to Rigby, “what is your name?”

“Thomas Rigby, Madam.”

“Is your mother alive?”

“No, Madam ; I mourn for her at this moment?”

“From what part of England did you come, Sir?”

“From Berkshire, Madam.”

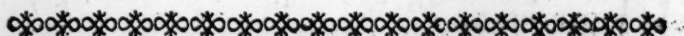
“One question more, Sir. Do you know Farmer Wilkins?”

“I was bred in his family, Madam,” answered Rigby, who was astonished at her eagerness,

eagerness, and the terror of her countenance.

“My God! my God!” exclaimed she, clasping her hands together, “what will become of me!—and of you too, unhappy young man!—There stands my daughter, and you are my son.”

The dreadful sounds were more than Rigby could support: He fell prostrate and senseless on the floor.



B O O K IX.

THE hapless Rigby fell senseless and prostrate on the floor. The tender and virtuous sensibility of the delicate Maria was roused to excess of agony; and she sunk in a swoon into the arms of her distracted mother. That wretched mother, almost lifeless herself, yet was not wanting in her care to relieve her offspring. Her screams brought assistance; and Miss Hil-
laston,

laston, who first entered the room, saw with Horror the scene of distress. She called up the servant, who helped her to raise up Rigby. He was yet insensible; and having struck his nose, in the fall, against the floor, the lower part of his face was covered with blood. Mrs. Leeson, when she saw him in that condition, felt all the mother arise in her bosom. Her internal feelings convinced her of the identity of his person: and the looks of the pallid youth brought the much-loved, long-lamented Kingsley fresh to her remembrance. In Miss Hillaston's care she left Maria, who was recovered and roused to life by her mother's screams, to go to her son's assistance. The more she viewed him, the stronger she found the resemblance of his father in him; and that served but to increase her tenderness. She cleansed his face, and in a little time he recovered his reason: He opened his languid eyes; and turning them alternately
on

on his mother and sister, raised a deep groan, and closed them again.

“He is gone,” exclaimed Mrs. Leeson, “he is gone for ever!”

The tears burst from her eyes as she spoke.

Miss Hillaston and her mother, who by this time reached the room where they then were, stood amazed at this sight. No lady in the country had preserved a better character than Mrs. Leeson, not more for her good sense and exemplary behaviour, than the management of her family and her domestic virtues. This appearance of such extraordinary distress in three persons, whom they had the greatest reason to think well of, alarmed and surprised them: it was not more shocking than unaccountable.—The servant retired at her mistress’s command, and an universal silence ensued.—Mrs. Leeson stood between her son and daughter, leaning on the back of his chair; her face covered with her handkerchief, to hide the flood of
tears

tears that could not be dried up.—Every thing that passed in her bosom contributed to her sorrow.

The poor Maria knew not what to think; and she could hardly credit what gave her so much pain. Her distress at this discovery was inexpressible, though at the same time she returned silent thanks to heaven for bringing it about.

In Rigby's brain all was horror: he compared his present situation with that of his late self-slaughtered friend; and he found himself treading the very path that led him to destruction. The thought was the excess of agony: He opened his eyes; he saw on one hand the cause of his friend's death, on the other the object of his own guilty passion: his reason almost forsook him. But in this pause he so far recollected himself, as to desire to know the history of his mother; and the cause of her totally relinquishing him, and concealing herself from his knowledge.—It was a dreadful mystery;

mystery; but nevertheless he determined to have it unravelled, though the consequence should be destruction.—So great an impression had his friend's fate made upon his mind, that he thought there could not be a state more wretched than that which resembled his. This resolution taken, he concluded his mother would not refuse him this satisfaction: but, as he had reason to apprehend a discovery of this transaction would not be proper, or even agreeable to her, before Mrs. and Miss Hillaston, he rose from his chair, and went towards them, where they yet stood silent spectators of this scene. His knees trembled as he walked: his voice failed him as he attempted to speak; it faltered when he found utterance. He addressed his friends.

“ I see, Ladies, the uneasiness this extraordinary appearance of sorrow has given you. Your humanity and compassion are interested in our behalf, and
“ you

“ you are affected by our misfortunes. You
 “ have experienced sufficient adversity your-
 “ selves, to pity others in a like situation.
 “ Let us not distress you too far. The
 “ wounds that providence has given you
 “ are hardly healed yet : let not our woes
 “ make them break out afresh. Let my
 “ request be prevailed on, to retire, till
 “ we shall be a little more composed, and
 “ you have recollected yourselves from the
 “ surprize which this has thrown you into.”

“ Ah, Mr. Rigby !” replied the old
 Lady, “ the sacred secrecy of misfortune
 “ should never be violated. I pity, I love,
 “ I wish to relieve you. You have com-
 “ forted me in my afflictions. May the
 “ peace of the righteous ever attend you !
 “ Come, Anna, come.”

They quitted the room with tearful eyes.
 When this unhappy family were left to
 themselves, Rigby's agitations, which seem-
 ed to have been suppressed in the presence
 of Mrs. and Miss Hillaston, burst forth.

He

He turned towards his yet weeping mother.

“ Thus long deprived of the comfort of
“ a mother’s blessing, now to find that mother
“ to whom really my affections are
“ due, gives me a degree of happiness.
“ But to find her thus, fills my heart with
“ sorrow, and my soul with woe. Yet,”
said he, casting himself on his knees before her, “ let me thus humbly implore
“ thy benediction, and do thou receive the
“ assurances of my duty and affection. And
“ if it be not an impenetrable mystery,
“ condescend to inform me, why, since
“ honoured with that endearing appellation
“ of son, you have so long concealed
“ yourself from my knowledge, or withdrawn
“ your natural protection from me?
“ What had my father done, that you
“ should forsake his child? or what crimes
“ had my unoffending innocence committed,
“ that you should abandon me?”

The

The wretched mother turned her eyes on her suppliant child. His voice, his look, the questions he asked, roused every tender and painful sensation in her bosom. The conflict was too mighty to be supported by her, and she fell into her son's arms. The groan she gave awaked Maria from the state of stupid insensibility in which she had long sat. She flew to her mother's assistance. The drops, which had been fortunately left in the room, contributed to restore her, without disturbing the family again. Maria, and her brother, placed her in the chair, and their endeavours to call her to life succeeded. Her head was reclined on her daughter's bosom on one side, and her afflicted son yet remained on his knee, with his hand on hers, on the other. "I will speak, if I can," said she, in a faint voice; "I will endeavour to give you every satisfaction. Yes, you are my child, my much-loved son, the fruits of my first love. In me behold your
 "wretched

“wretched mother; and, if ye, my chil-
 “dren, are unhappy, your mother is the
 “occasion of it.—Would to heaven that
 “all the woe fell on me alone, who am
 “only guilty, and ye, my innocent off-
 “spring, were not to suffer.—But,” said
 she, sinking on her knees, her eyes and
 hands cast up to heaven, “thy will, gra-
 “cious God, be done.—Pure and Eternal
 “Fountain of Truth, forgive and pardon
 “me.—My soul is humbled before thee;
 “and, bitter as the cup is which I now
 “must drink, I acknowledge thy justice,
 “and my own presumption.—Yet, Father
 “of mercies, let me, me only, bear this
 “load of woe, and spare these children,
 “who have sinned not.—I kiss the rod
 “with which I am chastened, and adore
 “the hand that punishes me.—Mine is the
 “crime, on me let thy anger fall.—Yet
 “who shall abide it?”

Her words, her looks, bespoke the emo-
 tions of her soul.—Rigby feared they might
 overcome

overcome her.—“Much honoured parent,
 “compose your distracted mind, nor thus
 “distress us, already too much afflicted.
 “Resume your seat, and trust to the good-
 “ness of that God, whose darling attri-
 “bute is mercy, and who styles himself the
 “Father of mankind. But let us, thy
 “children, know wherein thou hast of-
 “fended; and why thou, who art esteemed
 “so much for thy virtues, shouldest thus
 “accuse thyself of crimes which our souls
 “shudder to think of.—Despair and im-
 “penitence are too near akin, and should
 “be equally dreaded.—Beloved author of
 “my being, cease to grieve us beyond
 “measure, in making us thus the un-
 “happy witnesses of those dreadful trans-
 “ports.”

As he spoke he raised, and placed her
 in the chair.—“Yet permit me,” said she,
 “in the fulness of my soul, to petition
 “heaven for a blessing on thee; that blessing
 “which thou wantest.”

With

With humble reverence the pious youth bowed before her, as she laid her trembling hand upon his head—“May the
 “God of nature accord thee his blessing,
 “my child, as I now do mine; may he
 “crown thee with happiness, and give
 “peace to thy days!”

She seated herself, her eyes yet swimming in tears; and Rigby, at her desire, placed himself in a chair by her on one side, and the sensible, the weeping Maria, on the other.—“Be comforted, my child,” said the unhappy parent, turning to her, and taking her by the hand—“weep not, nor
 “add to my woe, by shewing me thy
 “distresses—I am going to relate my hi-
 “story; it will be a lesson, and a good
 “one, to you—I have every thing to hope
 “from your virtues, my dearest Maria;
 “and though it may fill me with shame to
 “repeat my follies and crimes before my
 “children, yet it is but part of my merited
 “punishment, and is only an act of con-
 “trition.

“trition.—You will learn from my relation
 “two things—that a disingenuous conceal-
 “ment of truth from those who have a
 “right to know every thing concerning
 “you, is attended with the most dangerous
 “consequences; and that, to scorn the
 “admonitions of parental tenderness, is
 “but the beginning of woe.—It is true,
 “my son, that I have endeavoured to pre-
 “serve that character and honour which
 “is the greatest ornament of a woman.
 “But the approbation of the world, with-
 “out the concurrent testimony of my own
 “heart, availed me little. Yet such was
 “my presumption, and such my opinion
 “of my own prudence, that I concluded
 “myself safe from any misfortunes which
 “might arise from my former misconduct.
 “But the hand of Heaven is visible in my
 “punishment; and I submit, with fear and
 “trembling, to its justice.”

The good lady began her tale, which she related with great exactness. As she de-

clared she had been privately married to Mr. Kingsley, she from thence took an opportunity of giving her daughter some wholesome and judicious precepts for her conduct in life. When she came to his sudden and unexpected death, she could not refrain from tears. She lamented it, as though it had happened but the preceding day; and her affectionate son paid the tribute of duty to his father's memory. These matters the reader is already acquainted with, and therefore a repetition would be needless. But we shall in this case, as we have once before done, take the pen in our own proper person, and explain to the reader how Miss Wakefield became Mrs. Leeson, and what was the cause of her sudden and unexpected appearance at Mrs. Hillaston's.

After the death of her father, Miss Wakefield had full employment for near four months, in getting her affairs settled, which diverted, in some measure, the melancholy
of

of her mind. The impression Mr. King-
ley's death had made on her was never to
be erased; but time, with lenient hand,
had calmed her sorrows, and deprived her
grief of its poignancy. The sober doc-
trines of adversity had helped to improve
both her manner and understanding. Se-
vere as the lessons of that dreaded school
are, yet they are sometimes found neces-
sary. The event of her father's death
came on by slow and visible steps; and
thus gradually prepared for his approach-
ing dissolution, the shock was greatly less-
ened. The effect which this experience of
affliction had on her person, was rather to
her advantage. The lively smartness of
her fine eyes, for she had very fine ones,
was agreeably softened, and they habitu-
ally expressed a mind at once deserving of
pity, and full of consolation. That strain
of tenderness was visible in her manner,
and rendered her an object worthy regard.
Some part of the Doctor's estate lay in

Suffolk; and Mr. Wroughton, an old and intimate friend of the late Doctor's, whom he made one of his executors (a trust which he refused to accept of, assuring Miss Wakefield that he would, nevertheless, be as attentive to her interest as if he had taken the execution of the will upon him) advised her to go into Suffolk, to inspect the matters there herself, which were in some little confusion; promising to accompany her. He proposed this jaunt not more for the sake of her pecuniary interest, than a desire to amuse and entertain her. And, indeed, he exerted himself with parental tenderness, to render every thing easy and agreeable to her. Mr. Wroughton, who had all that hilarity and facetiousness which is attendant on an healthy old age, whose judgement had been matured by experience and time, proved the instructive and pleasing companion of her journey. Their destination was to Bury St. Edmund's, beyond which this estate lay.

They

They arrived there without any accident, and went to the house of the late Doctor's attorney, with whom they were pressed to stay while their business detained them in that country; which invitation they accepted. It was particularly pleasing to Miss Wakefield to reside in his family during that time, as his wife was an agreeable woman, and it was more consistent with her character. The next day Mr. Chalmers, the attorney, appointed the gentleman who had purchased the estate on which the late Doctor had a mortgage, to meet him at his house, and dine with the young lady. Mr. Leeson attended at the time; and, as Miss Wakefield entirely confided in Mr. Wroughton, and her attorney, she left them to settle every thing between them, concerning the affair then in agitation.

When Mr. Leeson was introduced to Miss Wakefield before dinner, he was much struck with her appearance. There

was something in her countenance that interested him: he was pleased with her manner, and he was charmed with her good sense. Mr. Leeson, at this time, was about thirty years of age, was handsome, well shaped, and agreeable in his deportment. He had not the advantage of a liberal education, but had improved himself much by reading; had strong natural parts, and a retentive memory: he had good sense, yet was diffident of himself, and was rather reserved. What contributed to this was a disappointment he had met in the early part of his life, from a lady whom he had paid his addresses to, and who had given him a flattering reception; but she was a coquette, and married another, who was richer than him. This almost distracted him, and he retired from the world in a fit of disgust. He was naturally passionate: this adventure soured his temper, and rendered him more impatient than ever. He had very true notions of honour
and

and justice, but he rather strained them too much; and, as he advanced in years, grew very inflexible in them. He improved the estate which his father had left him, in those hours which he thus secluded himself from the converse of the world; and a relation having left him a considerable sum of money, he found he could make a good purchase of this estate, in which the late Doctor Wakefield had been concerned, and accordingly bought it. Thus did Mr. Leeson come to the sight of Miss Wakefield. Many girls in the country had set their caps at Mr. Leeson, for he was reputed rich, and that was charm enough; but they had always the mortification to find their pains all thrown away, for he regarded them not. His sensations were very different when he beheld Miss Wakefield. He perceived that the symptoms of his former passion were returning on him. He was chagrined at the thought, and strove, by the reflection of the bad treatment he had already met

with, to dissipate them. He strove in vain. All the time he was out of her sight was spent in contemplating her charms, and he longed to return to view them again. He did so, and made frequent comparisons between the objects of his present and former passion, and ever very ingeniously found out some excuse why he should not adhere to the vow he had made of never having any thing to do with the sex. There were also many reasons why he supposed he should be more happy with Miss Wakefield than the lady who had jilted him. Her good sense, and her amiable qualities prevented his having any suspicion of her treating him so basely. The consequence was, that he found himself more in love than ever.

That he might have an opportunity of more narrowly inspecting her character and conduct, he contrived to delay this business that he was to be a party in. He communicated his intentions to Mr. Chalmers, who

who knew very well that it was quite immaterial, whether it was finished now or six months hence; and that the only bad consequence, if she thought it so, would be, detaining her a little longer in the country: and he was willing to assist Leeson in this affair, as he conceived him to be a very good match for his fair client: He therefore gave him a general invitation to his house; telling him, at the same time, that though they might deceive the young Lady a little, it would be impossible to impose upon Mr. Wroughton; and therefore he should communicate his sentiments to him. Leeson replied, he had resolved upon doing so; and for that purpose intended to ask him and the whole party over to his house, as soon as ever his gardens were put somewhat in order, and matters a little settled within doors: for a batchelor's house is seldom remarkable for its regularity; and after dinner to break the matter to him. Chalmers approved the scheme,

and promised to stand his friend. In a few days it was put in execution; and he had the satisfaction of hearing the situation and place praised by the Lady whom he wished to make mistress of it. Every thing was liked, every thing was agreeable; the dinner was good and plentiful; and many jokes were circulated during the time of the repast, on a single state. A fresh bottle was produced, as the Ladies retired to take their evening's walk.

"This is really a very pretty place you have about you here, Mr. Leeson," said Mr. Wroughton; "and wants nothing but a wife to make it complete."

"I never found how much I wanted one till this moment, Sir."

"I am sure you may have enough of them that would be glad to pitch their tents here."

"Yes, Sir; but I expect happiness when I marry, and every one will not please me."

"Mr.

“ Mr. Leeson has been disappointed once already,” said Chalmers; “ which will make him difficult in his choice, I imagine: but let me tell you, Mr. Wroughton, he would be a good match for a woman with a middling fortune.”

“ When I marry,” said Leeson, “ I shall have no regard to pecuniary motives.”

“ They do not always produce happiness,” replied Wroughton.

“ Far from it,” returned he: “ that must arise from a mutual inclination; and it is in your power to increase my happiness very much, Mr. Wroughton.”

“ In mine, Sir! How, pray?”

“ By not discouraging my addresses to Miss Wakefield; or, if you should find me worthy, by speaking in my behalf. I have now seven hundred pounds a year clear estate; in about two years more it will be worth nine. I have conceived a very sincere and honourable passion for Miss Wakefield, and will make

“ her any settlement that you, as her friend,
 “ can propose. I have not presumed to
 “ open my heart to her, fearing lest it
 “ might be disagreeable to her, or that she
 “ was engaged, till I had first spoken to
 “ you.”

“ Sir,” replied Mr. Wroughton, “ I
 “ cannot pretend to answer for the young
 “ Lady’s inclinations, nor can I positively
 “ say that she is disengaged ; though I be-
 “ lieve she is. I think you may do very
 “ well together ; for she has been also dis-
 “ appointed in love ; and you must com-
 “ fort one another : that is all I know.”

He then opened all he knew, of Miss
 Wakefield’s engagement to Mr. Kingsley,
 to Leeson ; informed him of his death ;
 and gave him a character of the late Doc-
 tor and his daughter, which afforded infi-
 nite pleasure to the lover, who began to
 conceive some hopes of success. He in-
 formed him of the design of protracting
 matters ;

matters ; and the old gentleman came into the scheme very readily.

“ As for my part,” said he, “ I have
“ outlived most of my dearest connexions ;
“ but that is no reason why I should not
“ be assiduous in promoting the happiness
“ of others. I will stay with all my heart ;
“ but I would have you cautious how you
“ address Miss Wakefield : for your greatest
“ difficulty will be, to overcome her
“ hopeless prepossession in favour of her
“ dead lover. That once done, you have
“ many things in your favour : her condition
“ is a very lonely one since her father’s
“ death ; and I know she is conscious of
“ being very unequal to the management
“ of her own affairs.”

“ I assure you, Sir,” replied Mr. Lee-
son, “ I have formed the highest opinion
“ of her, from the small acquaintance I
“ have with her ; and should be very happy
“ to obtain her favour and affection, in
“ return for mine.”

As

As Mr. Leeson's house was some distance from Bury, it was agreed upon to remain there all night. Leeson rendered himself extremely agreeable and entertaining; and he found every loose that Miss Wakefield gave to her conversation but discovered fresh charms. Mr. Leeson was always at Chalmers's house; and Mr. Wroughton saw and approved him as worthy of Miss Wakefield's hand. The many assiduities and particular attention of Mr. Leeson to her did not escape her notice; but she attributed them to a wrong cause, and imputed them to his politeness: for Mrs. Chalmers, who knew that Leeson had been formerly disappointed in his affection for a young Lady, had informed Miss Wakefield of it; and she, who had lost her lover too, felt more sensibly the distresses of his situation. She had the greatest compassion for him; and the similarity of their conditions made her peculiarly complacent. From what source this

unex-

unexpected behaviour arose he knew not: it was a secret to him; but he enjoyed the sweets of it. It inspired him with hope; and every day he became more agreeable to her. They were frequently left alone. The losses they had mutually sustained were at first hinted at, they at last were the subject of their conversations. Leeson pitied the Lady, who had lost the amiable lover in Mr. Kingsley; and she condoled with him, for the infidelity of a mistress. These topics were pleasing at first sight, and soothed her melancholy: they became habitual at last; and when he happened to stay away longer than ordinary, she seemed at a loss. Two months had nearly elapsed since their arrival at Bury. Chalmers and Wroughton beheld, with great satisfaction, the progress he had made in her heart. But it was time to return home now; and matters might be brought to an explanation by that step also. Mr. Wroughton had joined in deceiving Miss Wakefield
into

into so long a stay, by telling her the business they came about could not possibly be concluded as soon as she expected. She proposed going to London: Wroughton accompanied her, and Mr. Leeson declaring he had a call there, would go along with them if they would permit him. They readily consented, to London they went, and Miss Wakefield retired to a distant relation's of her's who had a house there.

Mr. Leeson was still more agreeable to both Miss Wakefield and Mr. Wroughton, and soon after her arrival in London, the old gentleman began to joke her about him: this opened her eyes at once, and the mist vanished: this confounded her: well as she liked, and much as she esteemed, Mr. Leeson, she had, as she thought, in her own breast insuperable objections to matrimony. The remembrance of what had passed rose in her mind, and she could not bear the thought of acting so base and deceitful a part by a man who loved her.

To

To discover the whole transaction would have been death; and the probability of a discovery after marriage would be worse if possible: to avoid falling into this misfortune was to shun wedlock; and that she resolved to do. When Mr. Leeson came next he perceived a remarkable alteration in her behaviour to him: this shocked him prodigiously; he sought out his old friend, and communicated to him the change he had observed in her, and wanted to be informed of the cause. Mr. Wroughton assured him, and with great truth, that he could not account for it. "Perhaps it may be," said he, "from your reserve and diffidence in opening your mind. Go and speak to her."

"I cannot, and especially while she treats me so coldly; but I will write to her."

Miss Wakefield was not much surprized after what had passed, when she received a tender avowal of his passion, and a formal proposal

proposal from him. Her reply spoke her a woman of sense and delicacy; but it was not a favourable one. Wroughton calmed his transports, for he happened to be with him when he received it: he gave him hopes, and told him that by perseverance only he would gain his point. Those difficulties and objections that arose in Miss Wakefield's bosom, rendered his utmost assiduities ineffectual for a whole month, notwithstanding the friendly aid of Mr. Wroughton, and the advice of her faithful confidant Mrs. Rigby, whom she consulted upon this interesting subject. The widow in the course of her letters perceived something like inclination in her fair friend to Mr. Leeson. She had nothing but unimproved good sense to combat her objections with, and she recommended it strongly to her to accept the protection of a husband.

Mr. Wroughton's affairs rendered it necessary for him to return home, but Mr.
Leeson

Leeson remained in town on Miss Wakefield's account solely; and though his visits were painful, under her earnest injunctions of silence on the favourite subject of his heart, yet he continued them. But the anxiety of mind, with which he passed through another month in this way, produced very visible effects on his health. His spirits sunk, his appetite was lost, and sleep forsook him. In this state Miss Wakefield one evening informed him of her intention to leave London very soon, and retire from the world. This struck him, and he resolved to venture on a revival of his passion. He addressed her in the most tender and affecting manner: he threw himself at her feet: she interrupted him in his speech with some degree of impatience, declaring her resolution to hear no more. His agitations almost overcame him. She perceived the alteration in his countenance, and saw his whole frame shaken by the violence of his passion, hopeless, and

and unrequited. He respectfully retired, leaving her in distress almost equal to his own: but her's arose from compassion; his from despair. He went home, and knew not what to do: he rushed up stairs to his own chamber, and walked with hasty steps to and fro almost frantic, and talking aloud to himself. At last he snatched one of the pistols that hung by the side of the chimney, and clapping it to his head, snapped it; it missed fire, for his man had taken the priming away.

While he stood looking at the pistol which he had dashed against the floor in a paroxysm of rage and disappointment, he was surprized to see his old servant William run out of the closet which was in his room, and throw himself on his knees before him. William had taken a fancy to Mrs. Bridget, a clean likely girl, who lived as an upper servant in the house where his master lodged: he had told her his artless tale; and Mrs. Bridget did not seem averse. At the
instant

instant that Mr. Leeson returned in that distraction, which, but for the interposition of providence, might have produced the most dismal consequences, William was entertaining Bridget in his master's apartment; they heard his foot upon the stairs, and his voice; but his approach was so hasty, that they had no time to escape his notice. They therefore ran into the closet; and William, who had lived with Mr. Leeson many years, and was much esteemed by him, heard him talking aloud, and through a chink saw his actions; but he could not get out of the closet soon enough to prevent the application of the pistol to his head; the next instant he was kneeling before him, frightened and speechless with terror.

"Villain," exclaimed the frantic Leeson, "why art thou here?"

"Oh, Sir, forgive me; and do not seek to take away your precious life."

Bridget

Bridget hearing this, gave a loud shriek; and rushing out of the closet, pushed by the astonished Leeson, and ran down stairs as fast as she could.

“What is the meaning of all this?”

William explained the matter to him; and intreated him earnestly to forgive him; and begged, with tears in his eyes, that he would lay aside all designs against himself.

The faithful William prevailed at last; and his master sunk down in an arm-chair that stood near him, overwhelmed with a profound melancholy. William took care to remove every offensive weapon from his reach; and did not leave him much by himself, till he found him more calm and tranquil. Mr. Leeson remained for an hour almost insensible: his brain was confused, and he could determine upon nothing. At last he resolved to write to his cruel mistress, and take a farewell of her; then return to the country, and there linger

ger out the remainder of an hateful life. He called for pen and ink, and produced, after many trials, the following letter.

“ To Miss WAKEFIELD.

“ Madam,

“ Convinced by fatal experience, that
 “ your objections, either to me or the
 “ marriage-state, are insuperable, I intend
 “ to trouble you no more with my addresses,
 “ which have been so hateful to you. To-
 “ morrow I retire to the country; and,
 “ though I cannot have the happiness of
 “ spending my life with you, yet your re-
 “ membrance shall occupy the remainder
 “ of it. The duration of it will not be
 “ long—I shall fall the sacrifice to a pure
 “ and honourable passion, which I can
 “ never forget, or banish from my heart.
 “ I am doomed to be miserable! — Thus
 “ twice deprived of my dearest hopes, I
 “ can never expect to be happy. But I
 “ will

“ will do you the justice to say, that you
“ never encouraged the passion you had no
“ intention to reward. Wretched as I am
“ in not being able to render myself agree-
“ able to you, I can only complain of
“ your coldness. You have acted honour-
“ ably, would I could say kindly, by me.
“ I meant this as a farewell letter, but I
“ find I have run into lamentations.—Is it
“ not natural to grieve for the loss of every
“ thing that is dear to me? I will not ex-
“ postulate, charming Maria—You have
“ already told me I cannot expect to win
“ your favour. I go from your sight,
“ but misery attends me. I fly from your
“ presence, yet your lovely idea will ac-
“ company me in the most dreary solitudes.
“ I will hurry to the country, and in re-
“ tirement conceal my broken heart and
“ distracted brain. While I have the use
“ of my reason, let me employ it in wish-
“ ing you all imaginable felicity, and that
“ your last hours may possess that peace
“ and

"and comfort of which I am deprived.

"Be not offended then when I assure you

"that I am, and ever shall be,

"Your sincere and affectionate

"though unhappy admirer,

"A. LEESON."

When he had finished this letter, he dispatched William with it, charging him, at the same time, not to mention the least syllable of what had passed, on his peril. However, William thought that was a ridiculous delicacy; and if he could put his affairs upon a better footing by telling it, that he should do him a signal service, and deserve praise. Molly Jansen, Mrs. Rigby's sister, lived at that time with Miss Wakefield; and when William gave her his master's letter, he dropped some hints, and shook his head so significantly,

that the curiosity of Molly was raised very high. A little invitation was sufficient to make him comply with her requests. The cautious Molly took him into a private back room, and renewed her entreaty to be informed of what he meant.

The affairs of the masters and mistresses are generally known to the servants, especially if they are in love. Molly and William were not unacquainted with the present situation of things. William, in his relation, exaggerated his master's love and his despair. The terrified Molly did not hear the horrid tale without trembling; and they both concluded, that for a gentleman, with a good estate, to murder himself, was not only sinful, but shameful; and that if they could, by any means, prevent the commission of such a crime, it would be very meritorious. They directly entered into council; and, upon mature deliberation, it was agreed, that Molly should tell her mistress that night, as she
was

was undressing her, of the whole affair; and then, if she did not upon that give some hopes to the poor gentleman, that he would certainly die. — “And if he does,” added Molly, “I will quit her directly, “for I am sure his ghost will haunt her.”

When Miss Wakefield retired to her chamber, and had summoned Molly to attend her, she did not forget her errand. The letter was introduced, and ushered in with all the most dreadful additions that an head, fertile as Molly’s was, could invent. She heard the story with great uneasiness, and the letter did not contribute to calm it. She did not love Mr. Leeson with the same warmth of affection that Mr. Kingsley had inspired her with: yet she esteemed him. She made no answer to the impatient Molly, who wanted sadly to know what her intentions were, as she had promised to communicate them to William the next morning, who was to be with her very early, to be informed of the result of

their happy contrivance. It was a sad mortification to her when he came, agreeably to his appointment, to have no news to tell him. However, she informed him of what she had done, and enlarged her own good services, and dwelt upon her sagacity and cleverness in relating the affair.

During this conversation her mistress's bell rang, and she left William abruptly, telling him that she should certainly return with some intelligence. Miss Wakefield had passed a restless night. She had consulted her pillow, and weighed every argument for and against her change of situation with great deliberation. Mrs. Rigby's advice coinciding with her own inclination, turned the scale; and she resolved to see Mr. Leeson. But, as there was very little probability that a discovery of what had happened should ever come to light, she determined to preserve her own secret. Molly attended the summons of her mistress, who asked her what hour it was; and being informed,

informed, told her to send her compliments to Mr. Leeson, and that she should be glad to see him as soon as he conveniently could spare time to call on her. Molly ran down with this message, and William lost no time in conveying it to his master. Surprized at the command, he obeyed it immediately; and, as soon as ever he was dressed, went to her. He found her in expectation of him.—“I have obeyed your summons, Madam,” said he. “I did not intend to have seen you again, or renewed my hopeless passion, before I bade a final adieu to London, and society in general.—But your desire to speak to me, though it adds to my torment, must be complied with.”

She spoke not, but her tears fell plentifully from her eyes. Her distress affected him—He threw himself at her feet, and bedewed her fair hands with some drops, that her appearance of distress, and his own confusion, had brought into his eyes.

“ Rise, Sir,” said she; “ rise, I beseech
 “ you.—I know not but that you have
 “ much more reason to despise me, than
 “ retain so steadfast an attachment as I am
 “ convinced you do. I must take shame
 “ to myself—I should have entirely discour-
 “ aged your expectations at first, or not
 “ have attempted to destroy them so
 “ hastily now. I want no proofs of your
 “ sincerity, Sir; and hope you have a bet-
 “ ter opinion of me and yourself, than to
 “ suppose I could wish for those which I
 “ find you had well-nigh fatally pro-
 “ duced.”

“ Infamous villain!” exclaimed he, start-
 ing up —“ I charged him to be silent as
 “ death on that head, and he has betrayed
 “ me—I will punish him for it: but let
 “ me not suffer in your esteem, Miss Wake-
 “ field, on this account; do not suspect me
 “ of any mean artifice; my soul is above
 “ it. Though the frenzy attending a
 “ slighted and hopeless passion; as violent
 “ as

"as mine, might have urged me to make
 "such an attempt, yet let me assure you
 "most solemnly, that it is the only part
 "of the conduct of my life that I am
 "ashamed of your knowing. But as I
 "have, by this means, obtained the op-
 "portunity of pouring out my heart be-
 "fore you, let me once more assure you
 "that my life and happiness are entirely
 "in your hands. Though prudent and
 "religious considerations may secure me
 "from any future rashness, yet no pru-
 "dence can secure or prevent me from a
 "more tedious and gradual destruction.
 "If I am yet disgusting to your sight—"

"Have I ever expressed any thing like
 "disgust, Mr. Leeson? You wrong me
 "much—Strong though my objections
 "were, not to you, but the marriage-state
 "in general."

It is almost impossible, and will but
 little delight the reader to know the whole
 of this conversation: let it suffice to say,

that she suffered all her objections of every nature to be removed, and at length consented to become Mrs. Leeson. He was excessively happy in the tender and delicate assurances which Miss Wakefield gave him, of possessing as much affection for him as an heart, once engaged, could possibly admit. He had no fear of a deceased rival, nor any inclination to dispute the place which that rival held in an heart, which he thought, at that instant, he could, with much propriety, call his own.

As there were no impediments in the way to prevent their union, they talked of it as near approaching, and Leeson was for naming the day : but the Lady declared she had business which would detain her for a month in Oxfordshire, and which could not possibly be postponed or neglected. At the expiration of that time, she promised to meet him in London. This was the result of three or four days debate. Though a month was an age to the lover, yet was he

he obliged to comply. He declared his intention of going into Suffolk, to put his house in order, and prepare matters for her reception, against the happy moment in which she honoured him with her hand. On the same day they both left town: he turned his face towards Suffolk, and she went down to Farmer Wilkins's. The reader has been already informed that she then settled two hundred pounds a year on Rigby. In due time she returned to London, and gave her hand to Mr. Leeson, who received it with transport. They had lived together near twenty years with the greatest harmony. Mrs. Leeson's good sense and exemplary conduct made her the object of her husband's adoration. They were the happy parents of two boys and three girls, of whom Maria was the eldest. No cross or untoward accident had happened during that time, to disturb their peace; and Mrs. Leeson had plumed herself on her security, and applauded her

own prudence, in keeping this affair thus secret ; when one day, going to her daughter's drawers, she saw a box in one of them, which she opened by chance, having escaped her notice before then. She lifted the cover, and saw a letter directed to her daughter. As a mother, she thought herself authorized to look at it. The fervency of the expression convinced her it must be from somebody in the character of a lover. She read it through ; but, when she came to the name at the bottom, what tongue, what pen can describe her emotions ! All the blood in her body rushed up into her face ; all the transactions of the time past came fresh into her memory ; and she had nearly expired at the thought. This was the letter in which Rigby informed Maria of his return to Cambridge, and claimed the performance of her promise to meet him at Mrs. Hillaston's. There were some ambiguous expressions in it, which alarmed the wretched mother beyond

beyond imagination: nothing could equal her terror. She was ready to sink under the apprehension of an evil, which, so far as it had the least shadow of probability, was sufficiently dreadful to pierce her heart with inconsolable anguish. Mr. Leeson was happily engaged in some business, which would detain him from home for three or four days. She ordered a carriage, and drove directly to Mrs. Hillaston's.—The reader has already seen the consequences of her arrival.

To that hour did the weeping matron deduce the history of her life to her two children. Attentive, silent, melted with affection and tenderness, did they sit at her side, and the woes of their much-honoured parent sunk deep in their youthful imaginations. It is in the hour of distress that the voice of reason is heard: in the season of affliction the lessons of virtue penetrate our hearts, and are most attended to. Mrs. Leeson availed herself of the moment,

to shew, in her own melancholy example, what her children should avoid in their future lives. "Thus, my children," said she, "have I opened my whole heart to you; I have made you the confidants of all my affairs, and of a secret that has been, to the rest of the world, impenetrable. How much do I accuse myself at this moment, for having concealed my marriage with Mr. Kingsley from Mr. Leeson! Should it come to his knowledge, how he would accuse me, and justly, of falsehood! I should lose his good opinion, and infamy and disgrace would attend me. Nothing can equal the conscious confidence of truth. Supported by it, you are in no danger; but, on a disingenuous equivocation, the most dangerous consequences attend. With what face can I say that I have a son, and by a former husband, whom he has hitherto been ignorant of? Will he believe me? And will not my fame be
 01 "ruined?"

"ruined? Has it not already filled me
 "with horror? And everlasting misery had
 "been my portion, if the goodness of pro-
 "vidence had not interposed, and thrown
 "that letter in my way, by the knowledge
 "of which I have been able to prevent the
 "worst of crimes."

Rigby shuddered as she spoke: his knees
 smote each other: his teeth chattered in
 his head. Hillaston in his expiring mo-
 ments, in all the agony and excess of
 despair, was present to his imagination,
 and his blood chilled in his veins: he
 spoke not. Mrs. Leeson continued her
 discourse.

"These woes I have brought on myself,
 "Maria, by not consulting my father. I
 "married without his knowledge. My
 "affection for Mr. Kingsley prevailed over
 "my prudence; and the consequence is,
 "that I am wretched. Let this be a warn-
 "ing to you, my son, not to tempt the
 "woman whom you love to swerve from
 "the

“ the duty which she owes at once to her
 “ parents and herself. The deeds of ho-
 “ nesty want not concealment, and honour-
 “ able actions require not to be hidden.
 “ Let your feet, Oh my children, tread
 “ the paths of truth, and be bold and reso-
 “ lute in the cause of virtue.”

As she ceased, she hid her face, to con-
 ceal the tears that ran down her cheeks.
 A silence ensued. Rigby was lost in thought:
 he appeared almost stupified. Maria fell at
 her mother's feet.

“ Let it not grieve you, my dearest, my
 “ beloved mother, to have acquainted us
 “ with the history of your life. With me
 “ it shall remain an impenetrable secret till
 “ the end of time : and let me beseech you
 “ not to distress yourself with any appre-
 “ hensions : for no tongue will dare to call
 “ your character in question, which has
 “ been so long established on the founda-
 “ tion of virtue and honour. Surely the
 “ punishment you have suffered on my ac-
 “ count

“count is sufficient to expiate your faults,
“which you too severely accuse yourself
“with : But you have treated me with too
“great indulgence. I confess I merit your
“reproof, and have deserved your anger.
“Had I informed you of Mr. Rigby’s pay-
“ing his addresses to me, you had escaped
“this dreadful, this severe trial. Let me
“bear a part of the woes I have occasion-
“ed you.

“My much-loved Maria, let us not add
“self-accusation to increase our afflictions.
“If we have erred now, let us be more
“careful for the future : Let us hope that
“penitence will atone for our faults, and
“be thankful that nothing worse has hap-
“pened. As for you, my unhappy son,
“the image of him who first possessed my
“heart, on your account I have much to
“accuse myself. A false and mistaken
“shame determined me to abandon you.
“I lost all those feelings which a mother
“should

“should have possessed. Oh my son! I
 “deserve your reproach, your curses.”

“Not so,” said he, with a countenance
 expressive of the greatest emotion. “On
 “the contrary, it shall be my hourly em-
 “ployment, to supplicate the God of na-
 “ture to crown your days with peace and
 “happiness, to give comfort to your af-
 “flicted spirit, and beseech him to make
 “you forget me utterly, if the remem-
 “brance causes you uneasiness. Let the
 “virtuous family that look up to you
 “every hour, to seek a blessing in your
 “smiles, virtuous by your good; your
 “bright example, supply my place in your
 “heart! Let me be forgotten, so that
 “you can enjoy tranquillity! But no
 “thought of reproaching you shall ever
 “pollute my soul: instead of that, let me
 “bless you, my mother.”

“This is more than I can support,” said
 she, sobbing aloud. “This unexampled,
 “unme-

" unmerited tenderness, from a child whom
 " I have so long and entirely neglected,
 " overcomes me : it is anguish intolerable.
 " Oh Kingsley ! thou livest again in thy
 " child : he possesses not only thy exterior
 " form, but the virtues of thy heart ! But
 " I must tear myself from thee : I must go
 " where my duty and my affection call me."

" Oh do not fly thus hastily from me,"
 said he, smiting his breast. " From the
 " story of thy unhappy days, I can learn
 " that I am no more to call you mother.
 " I have much to say to you, much to ask
 " of you. Can I exist, thus deprived of
 " all my comforts at once ? In the affec-
 " tion of Maria, before the mystery of her
 " being my sister was revealed, I had
 " treasured my happiness. To find a mo-
 " ther gave me joy, but thus to lose her
 " for ever is distraction. My vitals are
 " torn away : my heart is pierced with
 " inexpressible woe."

" Let

" Let the exigency of my affairs, and
 " my situation, at this instant full of dan-
 " ger, plead my excuse in your bosom.
 " Heaven be my witness, that at this mo-
 " ment, my heart throbs with transport at
 " the sight of you, and feels all the af-
 " fection of a mother. I should think
 " myself honoured in having such a son
 " to boast of openly: but I am convinc-
 " ed you would not wish to detain me,
 " when a discovery so fatal to my future
 " peace and happiness might ensue."

" I will not detain you a moment lon-
 " ger. On me may all the load of this
 " dreadful separation fall. Maria, receive
 " the kiss of a brother. So pure was my
 " affection for you, that the transition is
 " very easy from the fondness of a lover
 " to the regard of a brother. But where
 " shall I meet thy like again to bless my
 " future days! May that happiness, which
 " I have lost, ever attend you!—And you,
 " my mother, farewell! This separation is
 " worse

" worfe than death ; the grave would hide
 " you from my fight, and my reason
 " would tell me there was no poffibility
 " of recalling you to life : but to have
 " you thus living, and debarred from re-
 " ceiving the tokens of my duty and af-
 " fection, is a continual and perpetual tor-
 " ment to me. Farewell much honoured
 " parent !"

He embraced his mother and fifter ;
 their tears choaked their utterance, and
 they retired without faying a word. Their
 carriage was waiting at the door, and they
 drove off without delay.

Rigby remained buried in thought and
 overwhelmed with sorrow, even after the
 chaise was gone : he found they had only
 taken a leave *en paffant* of the Hillafton's
 family, and therefore imagined they would
 look to him for an explanation of this
 fcene. What fhould he do ? What fhould
 he fay ? Sufficient were his own feelings
 to diftrefs and afflict him, nor could he
 bear

bear the thought of involving his friends in his troubles. How to act, disturbed him greatly ; and the bell rang for dinner before he could determine in what manner to demean him, or recompose his agitated spirits. Little was said during the time of the repast : and when it was over, he gave them to understand that a discovery had been made by Mrs. Leeson that concerned him much ; that it was imparted to him under the most binding promises of keeping it secret for a time, when that was elapsed he would impart it to them. They seemed satisfied : and the old lady, seeing him much dejected, used every argument in her power to console him. In vain did she try : every object that appeared to him, but served to remind him of his loss, and bring afresh into his memory the cause of his grief. If he walked in the garden his Maria's image met his eyes ; he saw her beauteous form, he beheld it with transport. A moment's recollection banished the

the illusion, and he trembled with horror at the thought that occupied his heated imagination. When within doors in the parlour, where the harpsichord was placed, he fancied he heard his Maria's voice : the sweet sounds yet tingled in his ears, and penetrated to his soul : but when he found himself in a dream, the hold his sister had gotten of his heart, gave him the greatest torments. He would persuade Miss Hillafton to sit down, and oblige him with a song : the plaintive sounds but added to his pain ; yet they softened it, and as she sang the big tear would trickle down his cheek unperceived by him. His melancholy increased every hour, and dangerous might be the consequence if it was suffered to grow on him. Frequently did he compare his situation with Hillafton's. " Mine," would he say, " was the crime
 " of chance : accident produced a passion,
 " that had it been indulged, would have
 " filled my heart with indelible woe.
 " Thanks,

" Thanks, fervent thanks, do I return to
 " heaven, that it was discovered so ear-
 " ly. I trust, I retain no other affection
 " for her now than a brother should for a
 " sister: it is true, I cannot on a sud-
 " den banish from my remembrance those
 " tender ideas that I suffered to take root
 " in my heart, and whose growth I che-
 " rished and promoted: or can it be fin-
 " ful to wish, that I may meet such ano-
 " ther charming and accomplished girl to
 " bless my future life? yet I am not en-
 " tirely guiltless. Have I not armed my
 " hand against a fellow-creature's life, only
 " to ensure the passion of my sister to my-
 " self? Perhaps at this moment he lan-
 " guishes under the wound which my
 " rashness and cruelty gave him. In this
 " circumstance I am more wretched than
 " my unhappy friend, whose fatal passion
 " began in his early days; it incorporat-
 " ed with his blood, and could only be
 " extinguished by his death. He fell the
 " victim

" victim of it, after a long and successful
 " combat. My supplications shall hourly
 " ascend to heaven to shield me from de-
 " spair like his, to endue me with forti-
 " tude to support the woes which I may be
 " inflicted with, that I may be withheld
 " from the commission of so rash and terri-
 " ble an action as his: nor boldly and
 " presumptuously of my own will, rush
 " into the presence of my creator and de-
 " mand of him, Why I was rendered miser-
 " able? Submission to his will shall in-
 " fluence my conduct."

Thus did the unhappy youth spend his
 hours in self-accusation, and at the same
 time endeavoured to fortify his heart with
 the lessons of resignation and patience; but
 they were ineffectual to oppose the torrent
 of woes that overwhelmed him. He de-
 termined to quit Mrs. Hillaston's: she
 and her daughter had strove to dissipate
 the grief which they saw preyed upon him
 continually. In them he found the care
 and

and tenderness of a mother and sister: but his heart was too deeply wounded to be easily cured. They did not oppose his departure, but made him promise to return to them again soon.

“ I repeat it to you,” said the old lady, “ that you are respected here as my child “ and her brother; come and comfort us “ sometimes, and receive consolation from “ us yourself.”

He thanked them in the most affectionate terms, and assured them of his regard, promising never to forget their kindness.

When he returned to Cambridge, he could not look at those places, where he had seen and conversed so often with his unhappy friend, without regret. These were eternal remembrances of his situation, could he ever have been inclined to forget it. In a short time he set out for Berkshire, where he arrived without any accident.

So

So severe were the woes he had experienced in the small space that he had been absent from the family, and so much had they affected him, that the good farmer and his wife expressed great concern at the alteration that appeared in him. Their affiduities could not dissipate his melancholy, or restore him to his former cheerful behaviour. As he seemed to court solitude, they indulged him. Hillaston used to be the companion of Rigby: his name had not been mentioned since the latter's arrival in the country. Hannah took an opportunity, when they were alone together, to ask Rigby where Mr. Hillaston was. He started at the name, looked wistfully at her, then uttered a deep sigh. This alarmed her very much, and she could not forbear repeating her question, with a kind of anxiety in her countenance.—“Alas!” replied Rigby, “he is no more.”

The poor girl turned away, and burst into tears. He was surprised at the sight.

“What can affect you so much, my dear Hannah, in the account of his death, as to cause these tears?”

“Ought not I to lament the death of a man who proved himself so good a friend to me?”

He permitted this concern in her to be screened under the name of friendship; but his heart seemed to give it a tenderer title: He judged from his own feelings.

Wilkins could not behold Rigby's dejection without uneasiness. On the fourth day after his arrival, when they were by themselves, he addressed him:

“I assure you, my dear Mr. Rigby, I cannot bear to see you so low-spirited and melancholy. I have ever looked upon you as my son, and have nearly as great an affection for you. Inform me then, what it is that has caused this
“alter-

“alteration in you; and what affects you
 “thus. Is it my refusal to satisfy your
 “curiosity?”

“Oh, would to God you had: then I
 “should not have been the wretch I am
 “now!”

“What is the matter?” said the affright-
 ed old man.

“Know, that I have seen my mother;
 “and by that means only was prevented
 “from marrying my sister: these are the
 “consequences of your silence.”

“Oh heaven!” said he, lifting up his
 eyes, and clapping his hands together, in
 an agony of terror, “What horror! Oh
 “that I had broke through all obligations
 “to have informed you of the truth of the
 “matter! What numberless evils does one
 “falshood occasion! Let me intreat you
 “to forgive me, my dear child: but I
 “had been bound in so solemn a manner
 “to conceal this circumstance, that it

“ would have been a crime that I never
“ could have forgiven myself, had I broke
“ my promise.”

Rigby assured him that he forgave him ;
and at the same time applauded his fide-
lity and resolution in keeping it secret. He
then opened and related the whole affair to
him. The good old man underwent many
agitations during the narrative, and wept
very plentifully.

“ I wonder not,” said Rigby, “ at your
“ emotions : the thought of the horrid
“ crime I was so near committing, is
“ enough to terrify any body. My reason
“ and the goodness of God have contri-
“ buted to my cure ; but I cannot avoid la-
“ menting the loss of so amiable a girl as
“ Maria : from thence my melancholy pro-
“ ceeds, and that alteration in me which
“ I have now acquainted you with the cause
“ of.”

Wilkins

Wilkins endeavoured to console him, by bidding him look out for somebody else to supply Maria's place in his heart. The other told him, that time alone could work the cure; but at present he could not think of any such thing.

When he found himself a little more composed, he rode over to Mr. Wilcox's. He was absent from home; but his wife received her friend with pleasure: yet it was much damped, by the great change she saw in him. After the most affectionate enquiries about his health, which she seemed to fear was but bad, and to which he returned equivocal answers, he asked after her husband and cousin.

"Indeed," said she, "Lydia is in a very
 "poor way: she seems to be in a decline.
 "No remedy can be found for her disorder: a total want of spirits, an irremovable melancholy, a carelessness of herself
 "and every thing about her: she affects

“solitude, and she often bursts into tears
 “without any visible cause. Her physi-
 “cians have advised a change of air and
 “situation for her; which there is no possi-
 “bility of inducing her to comply with.
 “She goes no where but to her own house;
 “and that seems only to increase her dejec-
 “tion: for I observe she is always worse
 “when she returns. You and she are only
 “fit company for each other: for you
 “look much alike.”

She had scarce uttered these words, when
 Miss Bennet came into the room. If she
 was surprized to see Rigby, he was not less
 affected at the sight of her. Her face was
 pale and wan; her whole frame was emaciat-
 ed; her eyes, whose lustre was a little dim-
 med, still retained their sweetness and be-
 nignity; her countenance retained its sensi-
 bility: and this great alteration in her, only
 seemed to have increased the delicacy of
 her shape and face. But the languor and
 dejection

dejection that appeared so visible in both, alarmed the heart of the compassionate, the humane Rigby. Every tender sensation in his composition arose in her behalf: they spoke in his eyes; they were visible in his countenance. As the refracted rays of the sun, just sunk below the horizon, tinges the drooping head of the fair lily, bent by heavy showers, with a faint red: so weak, so faint was the blush that overspread the pallid cheek of the languid Lydia, when Rigby rose at her entrance. Her almost exhausted spirits were set in motion by the sight of him; and gentle as that was, yet it was almost too powerful for her to support. She found it necessary to repose herself in a chair that was near her: and Mrs. Wilcox offered her some drops to revive her, before she could answer Rigby's enquiries after her health. She made some slight complaints of indisposition; and remarked, at the same time, that she was

afraid he had some reason to complain likewise, if she could judge from the alteration she perceived in him, of a bad state of health. He replied, he had been ill, but was then much better. The conversation took a general turn; and Miss Bennet bore her share in it as well as her weakness would permit her. It was far from sprightly; but it was sentimental and refined. Mrs. Wilcox perceived that Lydia was much pleased at finding Rigby there; and that she exerted herself very much. She thought she saw a softness and expressive compassion in Rigby's eyes, in his voice, in his manner, that indicated the feelings of his heart. She judged that his malady arose not from the illness of the body, but the mind. The more she observed him, the greater reason she had to maintain that opinion.

“If that is the case,” said she to herself, “my amiable cousin may perhaps cure him.”

He

He was pressed to stay to dinner: he complied, and spent the evening with the two ladies. When he took his leave, Mrs. Wilcox intreated him to call on them soon again; and indeed appointed the next day but one. He promised to attend them, and departed. He found himself very happy from that day's employment.

"Poor young Lady!" said he to himself; "her father's death has much affected her. She is most deserving of pity. How much is she altered! yet she still retains a great share of beauty. But it is like that which we imagine spirits possess: for there appears nothing corporeal about her. Sure, if my attempts to console or amuse her, will be attended with any success, I will readily devote my time and service to her."

Softened with his own distress, though at all times the child of compassion, yet at that moment was Rigby more sensible of affliction, and the danger of her situation,

than he would have been at any other time. He was not ignorant of the prepossession she had in favour of him; but he determined never to let the least hint of his being acquainted with it escape his lips: nor did he, in reality, plume himself upon it; though she was far from being disagreeable to him, and even though he felt a degree of pain arising from the reflection of her illness; yet he loved not: his heart had not intirely shaken off its former chains; and, instead of the fierce passion it burned with before, now entertained the most tender friendship for the gentle Lydia. She could not refrain from imparting the sensations of her heart to her cousin. Pleased as she was at the sight of him whose image engrossed her ideas, yet she was uneasy at the alteration that appeared in him. From the first time that her cousin had made a discovery of her sentiments, though she often talked favourably of him, yet she ever restrained herself from revealing the
the

the great affection she had conceived for him. She could not bring herself to confess the extent of her passion: and burying it in silence in her bosom, saw her approaching dissolution without dread: for all things were tasteless and disagreeable to her, deprived of him who alone could give them a relish.

This interview roused her almost expiring spirits. Mrs. Wilcox saw the effect it had upon her, and wished to have from her own mouth what she thought of Rigby. They talked of him after his departure; and Lydia acknowledged the pain she felt at the paleness of his looks, and the melancholy that appeared in his countenance.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Wilcox, "he has been crossed in love."

"Then he need have no greater misfortune," said she, with a sigh.

"I have known the torments of a slighted passion, Lydia."

"They are insupportable!"

"Yet, my dear Lydia, there are hopes."

"Not for me," said she, the tear of sorrow trickling gently down her face. "I see my end approaching; and the silent grave will hide my shame, and bury my misfortunes at once."

Mrs. Wilcox was greatly affected with this speech: it was more than ever she had said before; and the weak state of her body rendering her less able to support the conflicts of the mind, made her an object worthy pity. The tears still continued to pace one another down Lydia's woe-worn cheek. Mrs. Wilcox could not refrain from accompanying her: but she endeavoured to comfort her, by assuring her, she had some reason to believe that Rigby was not insensible to her charms; that she had observed his eyes almost constantly directed towards her, and that they expressed the greatest tenderness and pity. With these and other consolatory arguments did she strive to combat Lydia's affliction till she

she retired to rest. The next day she continually talked of him; and the day that he was appointed to visit them she rose very early, and was dressed ready to receive him, long before the hour that he was expected to come. Mrs. Wilcox smiled in secret at her uneasiness, the impatience she expressed, and rejoiced at the amendment of her spirits. He came at length; and Lydia's tell-tale eyes revealed the pleasure she felt at the sight of him whom her heart loved. Rigby had determined in his own breast, in what manner to demean himself to the fair invalid. He was all attention and tenderness: his voice was tuned to the softest accents; the most soothing words were selected to please her ear. They sunk deep in her soul, and increased her passion, at the moment they gave her the greatest delight.

While Rigby was thus affording consolation to the afflicted Lydia, it returned on himself in the greatest degree. The
compla-

complacent manner in which she received his civilities, and the notice she took of them, rejoiced his heart, and gratified his humanity. He was happy in seeing that he succeeded in his attempts to amuse her grief; and his endeavours to do it made him forget his own. Mrs. Wilcox saw the effect this behaviour had upon her cousin with the greatest pleasure.

As Rigby had declared that he should stay for some time in the country, he was pressed to visit them frequently, especially as Mr. Wilcox was now so much abroad, and busied in the settlement of Miss Bennet's affairs, being made an executor to her father's will. Rigby found this invitation very agreeable, and, in a short time, really necessary to his happiness. Miss Bennet had imperceptibly slid into the place which Maria had formerly held in his heart. As the friendship he professed to have for that charming young lady increased in tenderness, he began to doubt
the

the account which Mrs. Wilcox had given him of her regard for him. He could not think of asking her to verify it; but he felt himself very uneasy about it. There is nothing more dangerous for a man of sensibility, whose heart has been once attached by tender ties, which have been broken asunder by any accident, than to fall into the bosom of an amiable woman of a tender disposition. Instead of healing the former wounds, she makes them bleed afresh; and an heart once conquered, is easily subdued a second time. In this situation was Rigby, and truly unhappy he was; for he could not avoid reflecting that his character would inevitably suffer in the opinion of the world, who would suppose that he attached himself to this young lady merely for the sake of her fortune, which was so much beyond his hopes or expectation. But the pleasure he felt in her company stifled these remonstrances, and he became more enamoured every

every day he saw her. His visits had been very frequent, and always well received. Mr. Wilcox had seen him at his house, soon after his arrival in the country, and continued to express a great regard for him. Miss Bennet was then very ill. He returned to London. In the mean time Rigby saw Lydia almost every day, and soon became very intimate with her. Mrs. Wilcox left them alone, whenever she could find an opportunity of absenting herself; and her cousin never complained of, or perceived the want of her. Lydia recovered her spirits and her health amazingly every day: her eyes resumed their lustre, her cheeks began to revive their long-lost bloom. She could not recover her plumpness; but she mended so fast, that her health appeared to be almost re-established. Rigby had lost the melancholy and gloom that hung over his countenance. He began to be chearful and sprightly again; and the many marks of esteem,

esteem which he daily received from Miss Bennet, helped to inspire him with joy.

At this period Wilcox returned from London. Nothing could equal the surprise he expressed at the great change in Miss Bennet's health; but he did not rejoice at it internally, though he could not help saying so in public. Her situation was really dangerous. When he left her, the physicians declared they had no hopes of her recovery, unless she would consent to a change of air. This she would not do; nor did Wilcox use many arguments to persuade her to it; for, had she died, which there was every probability of, he would have inherited his uncle's estate; which, it must be confessed, he had a great affection for. It was not therefore very pleasing to him to see her so much recovered in the space of six weeks or a month, when he had already enjoyed her fortune in imagination, and was very ready and willing to do it in reality. This change
he

he very justly concluded must be caused by something which he had then no notion of, but which he determined to find out; and should it be necessary to be removed, he saw no good reason why it ought not.

The artless and natural behaviour of the innocent Lydia soon let him into the secret; and he found that Rigby was the physician who had effected this cure. It was more than he could well bear. To be deprived of that estate by him, and to see him going to enjoy it, was a triumph not to be tolerated. It stung him to the heart, and he could not restrain his temper in conformity to the dictates of his prudence; but behaved so very cool and distant to Rigby, that Lydia and his wife both perceived it. He would have insulted him if he had dared, but he was acquainted with his resolution; and though he could not effect his purpose by force, yet he might by artifice. The lion is allured into the toils, and the elephant is enticed into
the

the pit. The unsuspecting honesty of the brave man cannot descend to the machinations of the villain.

When Wilcox saw how matters stood, he went again to London. He was secure that no step could be taken to his prejudice, for Lydia was not yet of age, though she wanted but a few months of it; and he had power to prevent her marriage till then. He therefore left them to amuse themselves a little longer. Rigby was uneasy at this alteration in Wilcox's behaviour to him: he knew that he had given him no offence, and therefore could not even guess at the reason. He thought, perhaps, that he might take umbrage at the frequent visits he made to his house in his absence, and might have conceived some suspicions of his wife. It was disagreeable to him to be treated with coolness; and though, painful as it was to him to stay away from his Lydia, yet he determined to do it, at least while Mr.

Wilcox

Wilcox remained in the country, which he did for three days.

The third day Miss Bennet very innocently expressed her surprize to Mrs. Wilcox at Mr. Rigby's absence. Wilcox overheard her.—“I think he has been here often enough lately,” said he, sneering.

Lydia blushed with shame and anger.—“I have a right to see my friends here,” Sir,” returned she; “and I shall never forget the obligations I am under to “Mr. Rigby.”

“Nor I neither,” said he, interrupting her; “they are so great and so many, that “I cannot return them, and therefore do “not desire to see him.”

“Then, Sir, I will remove to my own “house, where I shall be at liberty to see “whom I please.”

This was a step that he did not desire she should take by any means. He therefore drew in his horns, and made many apologies, declaring he only jested; that Rigby was

was a very worthy young man, and that he esteemed him very much. Lydia seemed pacified, and no more was said of it. No Rigby appeared that day, and Miss Bennet could not conceal her uneasiness.

Early in the fourth morning Wilcox set off for London, and the ladies sent their compliments to Rigby, to know if he was well, fearing something ailed him, not having seen him so long. He learned from the servant, that Mr. Wilcox was departed; and returned compliments, with a promise to pay his respects to them that afternoon. Miss Bennet, who was better acquainted with Wilcox's notions and temper than Rigby, and had but a poor opinion of him, from some late transactions which she had seen, but which she concealed from his wife's knowledge, whom she loved and esteemed, almost dived to the bottom of Wilcox's intentions, in wishing to debar Rigby from visiting her.

Timid]

Timid as her natural disposition was, and though possessed of the greatest gentleness and complacency, yet she could not think of giving up the happiness of her life, to please the caprice or avarice of her cousin; and she determined to exert herself on this occasion, whenever she should find it necessary: but she could not, with any propriety, reveal or impart her suspicions or designs to Mrs. Wilcox; and keeping them in her own bosom, was disagreeable and distressing. These thoughts made her very melancholy, and Rigby perceived it when he came in the evening, according to promise. He excused his absence on account of some business he said he was engaged in, and concealed the real cause, on Mrs. Wilcox's account, whom he esteemed very much. But it made him truly unhappy to see Lydia relapsing into the state of melancholy and dejection from which he began to form the most sanguine hopes that she was recovering. His attention

tion and assiduities were not wanting to remove it. She was extremely well pleased at this mark of his regard : and gratified him, by appearing more sprightly, in consequence of his endeavours to amuse her. This made him exert himself, and never did he appear more agreeable than at that moment in Lydia's eyes. The worthy Mrs. Wilcox was not less happy than either of them, for she saw with the greatest pleasure the good effects that Rigby's conversation and company had upon her cousin ; and as she had a real esteem for him, she wished that they might be united together in the tenderest manner. Therefore she encouraged their passion, and gave them every opportunity of enjoying their private conversation without interruption.

Lydia told Rigby she hoped he would come and see them soon again ; that as he was the only person they saw in that solitude, it would be cruel in him to stay away from them. He promised to return the
next

next day. The spring was approaching, and the gentle Lydia was now able to walk abroad when the weather permitted. She found exercise improved her health, and frequently took short walks in the garden, on fine days, in Rigby's company, who always had the happiness of supporting her. Frequently would he retain her trembling hand in his, and often press it, without resistance, to his lips.

The END of VOL. II.



